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MEMORIAL EDITION

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MEMORIAL EDITION

VOLUME VIII

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to the compromises by which the slaves were to add, by three fifths of their number, to the representation of their master, and the slave trade was to be allowed for a certain number of years and prohibited for ever after. He showed his usual straightforward willingness to call things by their right names, in desiring to see "slavery" ~~[illegible]~~ named outright in the constitution, instead of being characterized with rowardly circumlocutions, as was actually done.

In fairly yielding to and assenting to a compromise he was perfectly right; the crazy ~~[illegible]~~ talk about the iniquity of consenting to any recognition of slavery whatever in the constitution is ~~[illegible]~~ beside the mark; and it is equally irrelevant to assert that the ~~[illegible]~~ so-called "compromises" were not properly compromises at all, because there were no mutual concessions, ~~[illegible]~~ these southern states having ~~[illegible]~~ no shadow of right to what they demanded, and only in part gave up. It was all important that there should be a Union; but it had to result ~~such a Union~~ from the voluntary action of all the states; and each state had

REDUCED FACSIMILE OF A PAGE OF MANUSCRIPT, "GOUVERNEUR MORRIS"

THOMAS HART BENTON

GOUVERNEUR MORRIS

BY

THEODORE ROOSEVELT

NEW YORK
CHARLES SCRIBNER'S SONS
MCMXXIV

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THE STATESMANSHIP OF THEODORE ROOSEVELT*

By Albert J. Beveridge

I

The statesmanship of Theodore Roosevelt consisted in the interpretation of a great period in American history. The policies he championed were but the expressions of public will which itself flowed from profound and elemental economic and social changes. Theodore Roosevelt led an historic movement. Long before he became President he saw that America had reached the point where a transition from an outworn to a modern economic and social order was indispensable. To effect this transition was the great work of his life, and it is the accomplishment of that fundamental advance that makes his career epochal.

He became President of the United States just after one of the most serious developments in American history. This development was the disappearance of free land. Until that point of time which marks the beginning of what always will be called "The Roosevelt Period," anybody could get a farm and a home of his own by the simple process of taking up substantially free land and living upon it. This process indeed had been going on since before the Revolution. Those who were in debt or felt the pressure of taxes or who wanted to own the land they tilled simply moved out into the

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wilderness or settled upon the prairies. So it was that such a thing as industrial pressure, in the sense we now understand that term, did not exist.

Immediately after the Civil War, moreover, there was a prodigious outburst of constructive energy. A great part of the continent still was to be occupied. Railroads were to be built; bridges to be constructed; cities erected. There was more than enough work for everybody in this country and for all of the immigrants from other lands. Indeed the necessity for labor was so great that manufacturing and other industries that suddenly took on immense proportions resorted to every expedient—some of them very bad—to bring cheap European labor to America. For a long time, however, there was no labor congestion—first because there was so much work to be done, and secondly because free land constantly drew people away from industrial centres. Free land was an outlet for discontent.

Finally this outlet was closed. Free land was all gone. The human tide had reached its last frontier, the Pacific Ocean, and was turned back upon itself. Such was the beginning of those economic and social conditions that had developed by the time Colonel Roosevelt had become President. These conditions were indicated by labor troubles growing out of industrial congestion and by a general unrest among the masses of the people. It became necessary for the nation to adjust itself to an entirely new situation which the disappearance of free land had brought about. Not only had millions upon millions of unoccupied acres prevented those industrial blood clots which old and thickly settled countries always had experienced, and thus created an economic and social state of things peculiar to America and entirely abnormal; but this

fact, continuing through more than a century, had also built up an individualism such as the world never had seen before. Men thought and acted solely from the view-point of what they believed to be their personal advantage. The common talk was of rights rather than of duties, of individual rather than of collective effort. Social ideals were scarcely recognized and the community spirit was very frail.

The first manifestation of the co-operative idea came in the form of great business organizations and the consolidation of railroad companies owning parts of the same lines into large corporations, controlling and operating long and unified systems. All this was natural and inevitable. Indeed the very necessities of the people themselves called for and created these great economic units. Without them it was impossible to supply promptly and adequately the needs of the people. For instance, the increase of what is called the laboring population—those employed in other industries than agriculture—required food-supplies, the preparation and distribution of which could be accomplished only by immense organizations. Speaking by and large, the same was true of course of other forms of industry.

This economic evolution went forward, however, under the individualist principles which an entirely different state of things had created. In short, while natural forces had totally revolutionized industry the old ideals still prevailed, though they no longer applied to the existing facts of life. We had emerged into a new period, but we still clung to ancient formulas of thinking. The heads of great business organizations insisted upon running them according to ancient individualist maxims. No matter how great a business organization became, no matter how extensive its dealings with the people,

no matter how dependent millions of human beings were upon these organizations, the managers of these mammoth concerns conducted them as though the concerns themselves were individuals. No moral or legal duty to the public was admitted—a fact which, recent though it is, is hard now for us to realize.

A great packing plant, for example, did its business with the public on the same economic principles as an individual butcher dealing with individual customers. Immense railroad systems did the transporting of the nation upon the same legal basis that an old-time wagoner or a stage-coach owner hauled small parcels of merchandise or carried a few passengers. The kind of service rendered, the rates fixed, the quality of food and the manner of its preparation and the prices charged for it were held to be none of the people's business, but solely the affair of the producing and transporting companies.

Thus American business became obsessed of a frenzy for gain. The spirit of greed ruled American industry. This showed itself in shocking form in many other ways than the illustrations already given. Hundreds of thousands—millions, in fact—of children were put to work in factories, mines, and sweat-shops at a period in their lives when such labor meant their physical and intellectual ruin. Labor, in fact, was regarded as a commodity. The economic theories of Adam Smith governed the treatment of working men by employers. Labor conditions, therefore, became worse as industrial congestion increased. The human element of the problem of labor received less and less consideration; indeed the "humanities" were not recognized by the ancient economic philosophy upon which modern industry still continued to be operated. The courts continued to de-

cide controversies arising from these new conditions by old rules which no longer fitted them.

Thus is revealed the vast, complicated, and delicate problem, national in its scope, which required solution when Theodore Roosevelt became President. There was, too, a collateral problem to be worked out; and this, though the inevitable result of the state of things that I have tried to outline, was peculiarly ugly and formidable.

In order to resist the growing demand for some sort of check upon their practices, in order to safeguard what they felt to be their privileges, and indeed to secure even greater and more unjust privileges, the great transporting, manufacturing, and other industrial corporations went into politics. In a very practical way they were united. They always acted in concert, with perfect understanding, and they knew what they wanted to prevent and what they wanted to get. Their agents were present at the meetings of every State legislature and every session of Congress. Expensive lobbies were maintained permanently, and a certain class of men developed who made legislative manipulation their profession. Moreover, these closely allied business concerns, acting under the old theory that they ought to do as they pleased, became, for the purposes above stated, very active and potent in the management of political parties. As is now well known they often were able to elect or defeat candidates for State legislatures and also candidates for the national House and Senate. In brief, a powerful and utterly non-public influence grew up, the workings of which, though unseen, had a great deal to do with the making and execution of laws, both State and national.

The economic wrongs suffered by the people afforded

enced were the men who opposed them, so unorganized was public opinion, on the one hand, and so perfectly disciplined the forces which wished to keep things as they were, on the other hand, that it seemed a hopeless task to attempt to accomplish anything.

The interplay within the two great political parties of the allied reactionary forces made any effort to secure liberal legislation infinitely difficult; and this difficulty was increased by demagogic resistance to any measures, however scientific and approved, that so much as recognized the legal existence of great corporations. Absurd as it now appears, it nevertheless was a fact that the extremists of reaction and the extremists of radicalism worked together, without intending to do so, for the defeat of every common-sense and up-to-date reform that conditions imperatively demanded. True statesmanship—the moderate, the reasonable, and the just—sometimes has had hard sledding even in a republic.

II

It was in waging this long-continued warfare that the character, strength, and personality of Theodore Roosevelt were most fully revealed. He was a very able politician and understood from experience in New York the working of political organizations and the methods employed by those who then controlled them. He knew that to accomplish anything really practical, at that particular time, he must work with the political system as he found it, bring the leaders to agreement with him as far as possible, and hold, over organizations and leaders alike, that appeal to public opinion, of the art of making which he was so great a master.

In short, he had to act as a statesman. He could not,

therefore, become what one might term a professional crusader—could not engage in the business of a civic evangelist. He went to the people only when it was necessary to arouse them and to crystallize their will upon specific and practical purposes.

So in dealing with the strong men of Congress, who, generally speaking, were against him and his policies, he did not, except in a very few instances, close and bolt the door against them. Most of them could always enter and work with him when, no matter for what reason, they were ready to help him with any measure the enactment of which, at the moment, happened to be the particular task he had in hand. He consulted freely with other men. The late Senator Eugene Hale, of Maine, who during the two Roosevelt Administrations was the real leader of the Senate whenever he saw fit to take the trouble, and who sincerely and stubbornly opposed nearly all the Roosevelt reforms, once told me that in all his very long experience in public life he had never known a man who sought counsel so much as did President Roosevelt.

"And yet," said Senator Hale, "most people think that he is impulsive and won't even listen to advice, much less take it. I can't imagine," said he, "how such an idea got out."

This erroneous public conception of Colonel Roosevelt was undoubtedly due to his quick and emphatic manner of speaking, to his strenuous physical habits and actions, and to his apparently abrupt decisions. Also, of course, by methods so well known to the politician, his enemies in both parties, his own party as well as the opposition party, spread reports of his "impulsiveness."

It is one of the small defects of democracies that a

totally false idea can be planted in the minds of the people concerning one who is fighting the people's battles.

As a matter of fact Theodore Roosevelt never took an important step until he had asked for the opinion and collected the judgment of a large number of men. While in the White House his consultations were almost incessant. Sometimes he asked several men to gather about him at the same time and compare views; sometimes he would ask one man to come to the White House and go over thoroughly the matter to be decided. Often these conferences would last for hours.

What he required on such occasions was clear, cold, practical thinking. A display of emotion usually made a bad impression upon him. Many men whom Colonel Roosevelt liked and trusted were dropped from his list of advisers after two or three interviews because their comment had more heat than light.

This unemotional quality of Theodore Roosevelt was also well illustrated in controversies over patronage. When senators, representatives, and influential politicians would urge a certain appointment chiefly on grounds of political expediency or factional favoritism, on the one hand, or as a means of conciliating opposition with veiled threats of retaliation if the President did not yield, President Roosevelt reacted strongly against both such pleas—especially if they were presented with fervor.

I have known of instances in more than one State where he rebuked an entire Congressional delegation who demanded appointments as matters of political right or rather as matters of political pull, and instead appointed a man whose friends did no more than coldly lay before the President the candidate's superior quali-

fications for the office. And I have known of many cases where supporters failed because enthusiasm instead of facts was advanced. Unemotional argument based on proof was the surest road to his approval.

In consultation as to measures which he wished Congress to pass or policies which he was formulating or political steps to be taken, he was the easiest man to talk to I ever knew. If he was convinced of your sincerity you could say anything to him you liked. You could even criticise him personally. His close friends often thought he actually invited personal criticism. He would argue the subject out with the greatest possible frankness and without the slightest trace of resentment or irritation.

On the contrary, no man could be more wary than he, no man could fence with more skill if he suspected that the person with whom he was talking was unfriendly, insincere, or even subtle. If he detected falsehood or sharp practices his anger instantly was aroused.

He usually accepted the judgment of the majority of his advisers. While he was President he had about him a number of men who were sound counsellors and fearless friends, and no man could have more generously acknowledged indebtedness to others than President Roosevelt to these men. Much of his success, indeed, was due to his open-mindedness. He had a boundless hospitality for ideas. He welcomed thought from whatever source, especially constructive thought. He was quick to adopt the ideas of others, but he did not fail to give them the credit. There was something chivalrous about his generosity. Friends and even enemies were frequently surprised by the most unexpected exhibitions of this quality.

Few men ever lived who had so many and such at-

tractive phases of mind and character. It seemed impossible that one person could have read so much, so variously, and with such understanding. On one long campaign trip I found him reading, between stops, Moreau's "Memoirs" in French. He never went anywhere without taking several books with him. While his extensive reading gave him an immense fund of that knowledge which books afford, his experiences with men and the world had been so manifold, vivid, and intense that he knew life at first-hand from many angles.

He liked to talk of literature, of sport, of science, of travel, and especially of history, more than of politics or business in the narrow sense of those terms. It is not possible to imagine one more attractive and engaging in social intercourse. Misused as the word "charm" is, there is no other term that describes the effect of his personality on others. His talk and manner were as easy and as casual as they were sparkling and vital.

It is not difficult to bore a man so widely cultured, and this was true of Theodore Roosevelt. Stupidity disgusted him; even when one who was his friend would do or say anything stupid he could be very harsh. And dulness irritated him. It was hard for him not to show his impatience with the pallid and the commonplace. He abhorred banal conversation as much as he delighted in bright, witty, thoughtful, and informed talk. When even a man who was his supporter but who had supported nothing in common with him except the politics of the day would insist on unnecessary conferences, Colonel Roosevelt, though appreciating that friend's fidelity and assistance, was nevertheless frequently ill at ease with him.

Sometimes such a person would lose favor because of the incessant monotony of the topics brought up and

the conversations about them. On the other hand, their mutual love of literature was one of the many bonds between Colonel Roosevelt and Senator Lodge. "I should talk to Lodge about books if we disagreed on the Ten Commandments," he said to a too fervid supporter who was protesting against the President's intimacy with the Massachusetts senator when the latter, with fine independence, was opposing some measure of the Administration.

III

The "progressive" movement led by Theodore Roosevelt was to him a sacred cause. The spirit with which he led it was that of a soldier. His leadership was marked by a terrible fervor and also by an august dignity. He was absolutely unselfish and profoundly sincere about it. Indeed his sincerity and unselfishness had a kind of exaltation. This is proved by the message he sent to the people just after he was shot in the campaign of 1912, and at an hour when it was not certain whether he would live or die.

As soon as he had been taken from Milwaukee to the hospital in Chicago the secretary of the National Committee, Mr. Oscar King Davis, who was with him, telephoned to me in the southern part of my State, where I was speaking, to cancel all engagements and come to Chicago immediately. When I arrived at the hospital I asked Doctor Murphy, the surgeon in charge, what were the prospects of recovery. He answered that nothing certain could be predicted at that time, but that he believed Colonel Roosevelt would survive. When I went to his bedside he greeted me as though nothing had happened, and then said:

"The meeting at Louisville, Ky., to-morrow night,

where I was to have spoken, must not be abandoned. One of my written speeches was to have been made there. I have sent for you to ask you to fill that engagement. You ought not, of course, to read my prepared speech. But I want you to give a certain part of it—less than a page. Principally, however, I wish you to give a message from me to the people. I am not strong enough to dictate it, but I can outline the general idea."

I took his manuscript and that night and the next day wrote the speech he asked me to deliver, including in it the brief paragraphs from his written address which he had requested to be given out. I drafted the message he sent to the people, telephoned it to Mr. Davis, who submitted it to Colonel Roosevelt, and received his approval; and that night I delivered it.

It was in such fashion that the wounded leader in Chicago thus spoke to the nation from the platform of Phœnix Hall, Louisville, Ky., on the night of October 17, 1912. I quote from the report in the Louisville *Herald* of the following day:

"It matters little about me, but it matters all about the cause we fight for. If one soldier who happens to carry the flag is stricken, another will take it from his hands and carry it on. One after another the standard-bearers may be laid low, but the standard itself will never fall.

"You know that personally I did not want ever again to be a candidate for office. And you know that only the call that came to the men of the Sixties made me answer it in our day as they did more nobly in their day. And now, as then, it is not important whether one leader lives or dies. It is important only that the cause shall live and win.

"Tell the people not to worry about me; for if I go down, another will take my place. Always the army is there. Always the cause is there; and it is the cause for which the people should care, for it is the people's cause."

These sentences from a man who had no assurance that he would be alive when they were spoken prove his deep sincerity and reveal his conception of that great American advance movement of which he was the captain.

Theodore Roosevelt was infinitely proud of the fact that the new party which he tried to establish polled a great majority of the Republican votes of the country, and a large number of Democratic votes. Earnest as he was to found a liberal party in America, just as Jefferson may be said to have founded the original Republican Party, Jackson the Democratic Party, and Lincoln the new Republican Party, and keen as was his disappointment that his efforts were not successful, he did not think that they had been in vain.

He was convinced that the historic movement of which he was the supreme exponent saved the Republican Party from the doom that overtook the Federalist and Whig Parties. He believed that but for the great liberal advance of which he was the standard-bearer the Republican Party would have become hopelessly reactionary, just as was the case with the Federalist and Whig Parties, and just as has been the case with old political parties in other free countries.

Since the spirit of the whole world was distinctly liberal, since indeed the very elements of our industrial and social development required that political parties keep pace with that development, Theodore Roosevelt believed that for any political party to resist the transi-

tion which the American people were undergoing meant the inevitable decline and early extinction of that party.

"We have put life into our party," meaning the Republican Party, he remarked to me not long before his last illness. "We have made it a party of to-day—a party that young men and women can come into with good heart. So our work has borne sound fruit."

He felt indeed that his labors during The Roosevelt Period had permanently ended outworn political methods and liberalized the Democratic as well as the Republican Party. He believed that he had destroyed reactionary influences in American life for a long time to come.

That part of his work accomplished, he again became the most active of Republicans, and soon was accorded by common consent the leadership of the rejuvenated and reunited party. Had he lived, there can be little doubt that in 1920 the Republican Party would have nominated him by acclamation for the presidency.

IV

His foreign statesmanship was singularly clear and simple. It was based on two principles: First, that of nationalism—"the most intense American nationalism," as he put it; and, second, that our particular province is the Western Hemisphere. From these conceptions of America's place and mission in the world flowed the Roosevelt South American policy, the Roosevelt Cuban policy, the Roosevelt Canal policy, the Roosevelt Mexican policy—that American world policy, in short, which grew naturally out of our history and our geographical situation, and of which Colonel Roosevelt was the latest champion.

His crowning achievement was his Herculean labor to compel the United States to take part in the European War. Strenuous as was his whole life, he put more energy into his appeals to the people during the two years preceding our entrance into that conflict than he displayed at any other period of his career. During that time he did indeed become a crusader. At no time in his life was he ever so passionate, so powerful.

After we declared war Colonel Roosevelt was all anxiety that we should strike with all our might. He was sure that Germany would be defeated ultimately—he knew that this country never would stop until it was victorious. But from the Battle of Château-Thierry he knew that the triumphant end was in sight.

Characteristically he then turned his mind to the conditions in which the country would find itself within two or three years from the ending of the war. He was convinced that the period through which the country would pass during the present and succeeding decades would be of the very gravest character—more serious than any since the Civil War—and that we should get ready for that period not only by devising practical measures and methods to deal with the conditions that would soon and now do confront us, but also by putting ourselves into the proper state of mind to endure the trials we must undergo.

I do not think that his mind ever worked with greater precision than in differentiating that species of anarchism which we popularly term "Bolshevism" from that form of normal progress called liberalism. On this point he had great fear that the protest against "Bolshevism" would throw liberal men into the ranks of reaction—a result that, in turn, would surely strengthen the very "Bolshevism" it was intended to defeat. He

believed that the road ahead of us was perilous and that only by exercise of steady common sense and self-restraint could we travel it without disaster.

V

So much for his statesmanship. Let us now turn to a phase of his activities in which he took far more pleasure than in the handling of current public affairs—literature. Indeed his reading, study, and writing, especially of history, was a principal source of his knowledge, vision, and courage in statesmanship and politics. While not the best, the two biographies within these covers are fair illustrations of his interest in historical work.

These two volumes cover American history from before the Revolution down nearly to the beginning of the Civil War. This was the founding and first phase of the building period of the American Nation.

Theodore Roosevelt weaves the story of these important and thrilling decades about the lives and careers of two of the most brilliant and notable of American statesmen of the second class; for Gouverneur Morris and Thomas Hart Benton are leaders among those who stand just below such men as Webster and Clay. Of course Washington and Lincoln are "like stars and dwell apart"; while Hamilton, Marshall, and Jefferson form the first rank under these two super-characters.

Although embarrassed by the very limited size of the volume required by the publishers, Colonel Roosevelt narrates the weighty, albeit picturesque, events in the life of Morris with more completeness and accuracy than one could expect in so small a book. Few pages of our history are more attractive in a placid way than

those which deal with "colonial New York," and the hasty sketch of that mediæval condition in a new, raw country, which Colonel Roosevelt draws so surprisingly distinct and sufficiently informing.

The outbreak of the Revolution, Independence, the transition through anarchy to the Constitution, our foreign problems, especially those flowing from our grave difficulties with republican France, the fall of the great Federalist Party, the War of 1812, and the New England secession movement are set forth in swiftly moving narrative.

We get a good deal of Theodore Roosevelt's character and basic ideas in his "Morris." For instance, his pure and forthright Americanism is revealed by his comment on our second war with Great Britain: "The War of 1812 was eminently justifiable, and was of the greatest service to the nation. . . . We very properly singled out our chief aggressor. . . . The war was distinctly worth fighting, and resulted in good to the country." It should be said, by the way, that Colonel Roosevelt's book "Naval War of 1812," written when he was just out of college, is the best account of that conflict except, of course, the monumental work of Admiral Mahan. Roosevelt's "Morris" is full of expressions of the author's robust and aggressive Americanism such as this: "Subservience to foreigners was a feature of our early party history"; or "our politics were still French or English, but not yet American."

Roosevelt's abhorrence of disorder, violence, bloodshed, and mob rule fairly flames in his description of the brutal beastliness of the French Revolution with its "denial of all religion." Such phrases as "base mob," "raving furious horde," "maddened savages" whose leaders were "black-hearted wretches," and the like,

snap and flash throughout the pages dealing with Morris as American Minister to France.

The Revolutionary government of France was, avows Roosevelt, "a despotism as well as an anarchy"; and "the early tribunals ruled red-handed with a whimsical and ferocious tyranny." He even finds it in his heart to pity the King—"poor Louis XVI" he calls him more than once. And Roosevelt took the measure of the noble-minded, brave, and well-meaning but vain, weak, and shallow Lafayette. Admirable is the author's short statement of the methods and purposes of the French Revolution, which occupies less than a single page.

Roosevelt's love of bright and sprightly talk is shown by the keen relish with which he writes of the experience of Morris in the scintillant society of Paris. Indeed, engaging as these particular pages are, they are somewhat too many for the proportions of the volume.

Although the "Life of Thomas H. Benton" was written two years before Colonel Roosevelt produced his "Morris," it is more solid and careful than the later book. Both volumes were done at a very early age, the "Benton" when Roosevelt was only twenty-eight and the "Morris" when he was thirty years old. Moreover, he was, at that time, engaged with feverish energy in politics; and to the mere scholar and student it is amazing that Roosevelt could do any worth-while writing at all in such a period, at such an age, and under such conditions.

Benton was thirty-four years old at the time Morris died; and, of course, his active political life embraced a continuation of the period covered by the career of Morris. And a vital period of American history it was, now tranquil, now stormy, but always full of move-

ment, color, and things that were really fresh and new in the world.

The author's love of "the West," which always allured him and by which, indeed, it is perhaps not too much to say that he was obsessed, sparkles from almost every page. The first three chapters of Roosevelt's "Benton" are as good a brief and highly condensed statement of our early Western development as has been written.

Again Roosevelt himself appears in these pages just as was the case in his "Morris." Slavery was not the only cause of the Mexican War, he says—perhaps not even the principal moving force that brought on that conflict, so fortunate for America; love of adventure, lust for land, "manifest destiny" also and perhaps more, were causes of the war with Mexico: "Where the Western men had gone as traders, who could on occasion fight, they all hoped on some day to go as warriors, who would acquire gain by their conquests." Plainly young Roosevelt liked this, albeit he is highly sensitive to the lack of the ethical in these hard-fighting, land-grabbing patriots who, he admits, "had very little more idea of right or wrong in the matter than so many Norse Vikings might have felt."

In fact, while obviously attracted by the imperialism of our "manifest destiny," yet Roosevelt fairly blazes with wrath in his denunciation of the dishonesty which sometimes accompanied that doctrine. On the other hand, consider this as an outgiving of feelings so strong that he could not repress them.

"Yet the arrogant attitude he [Benton] assumed on the Oregon question was more than justified by the destiny of the great Republic; and it would have been well for all America if we had insisted even more than

we did upon the extension northward of our boundaries. Not only the Columbia but also the Red River of the North—and the Saskatchewan and Fraser as well—should lie wholly within our limits. Columbia, Saskatchewan, and Manitoba would, as states of the American Union, hold positions incomparably more important, grander, and more dignified than they can ever hope to reach, either as independent communities or as provincial dependencies of a foreign power. No foot of soil to which we had any title in the Northwest should have been given up; we were the people who could use it best and we ought to have taken it all." Yet, conversely: "The Conquest of Texas should properly be classed with conquests like those of the Norse Sea-rovers. The virtues and faults alike of the Texans were those of a barbaric age."

Another curious complex in Roosevelt's character may be seen in the praise and evident admiration for the aristocratic personages who led the Revolution, founded and for more than a generation ran our government; and yet his approval of that "fierce democratie," springing from the grass roots, that brought leaders like Jackson and Lincoln.

Roosevelt's dislike of and disgust with extremists who insist that their particular plans and views are wholly moral, peculiarly exalted, and altogether inspired of God, is manifested in his contempt for the "professional abolitionists" whose cause, he asserts, "has had such a halo shed round it by the after-course of events which they themselves in reality did very little to shape, that it has been usual to speak of them with absurdly exaggerated praise. . . . The influence of the professional abolitionists upon the growth of the antislavery sentiment as often as not merely warped it and twisted it

out of proper shape. . . . Lincoln had to dread the influence of the extreme abolitionists only less than that of the Copperheads. Many of their leaders possessed no good qualities beyond their fearlessness and truth—qualities that were also possessed by the Southern fire-eaters. They belonged to that class of men that is always engaged in some agitation or other." Still the author admits that, despite their unpleasing and, indeed, repellent qualities, these abolitionists "were at least working in the right direction on the main issue."

The rise of Jacksonian democracy, the eight years' reign of that harsh but patriotic ruler, the outburst of nullification, the war on the Second Bank of the United States, the emergence of the slavery question, Texas, Mexico, Oregon (glorious epoch of national expansion), the repeal of the Great Compromise—all the profound movements of the critical thirty years of Benton's membership in the Senate are outlined as well as possible in so short a space.

And through it all Roosevelt interprets himself, not consciously of course, but none the less distinctly. By comment on characters, issues, and events and by comparisons of the past with the present, the vivid and ardent author describes his own state of mind and bent of heart better than could be done by an essayist on Roosevelt.

It has been remarked so often that the observation is trite and tasteless, that European politicians and statesmen are often also writers, some of them of great excellence; whereas American politicians and statesmen have shown little or no aptitude for letters or any other form of culture. Yet dulled by repetition as this fact is, it is nevertheless so notable and important that mention of

it must again be made especially in connection with the life-work of Theodore Roosevelt.

For he broke this unworthy custom of American public men. He not only read with voracious eagerness but he also produced many acceptable books. The marvel is that a man of action so incessant, intense, and tremendous was also a student and a writer of wide range and variety. Not the least of Theodore Roosevelt's services to America was the precedent he made that our public men can devote themselves to literature as well as to politics and be better public servants for having done so. He demonstrated that, even in politics, learning need not, necessarily, be a handicap; and that knowledge of the Past may even be helpful in the effort to interpret the present.

THOMAS HART BENTON

BIBLIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

THOMAS HART BENTON. By Theodore Roosevelt. Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin Company. The Riverside Press, Cambridge, 1887.

vi, 372 *pp.*, 12*mo*, *blue cloth.*

This volume was specially written for the "American Statesmen" series and did not appear in magazine form. It has been frequently reprinted. A large paper illustrated edition, limited to five hundred copies, none of which were sold except as part of the complete series, appeared in 1898–1899.

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THOMAS HART BENTON

CHAPTER I

THE YOUNG WEST

EVEN before the end of the Revolutionary War the movement had begun which was to change in form a straggling chain of seaboard republics into a mighty continental nation, the great bulk of whose people would live to the westward of the Appalachian Mountains. The hardy and restless backwoodsmen, dwelling along the eastern slopes of the Alleghanies, were already crossing the mountain crests and hewing their way into the vast, sombre forests of the Mississippi basin; and for the first time English-speaking communities were growing up along waters whose outlet was into the Gulf of Mexico and not into the Atlantic Ocean. Among these communities Kentucky and Tennessee were the earliest to form themselves into States; and around them, as a nucleus, other States of the woodland and the prairie were rapidly developed, until, by the close of the second decade in the present century, the region between the Great Lakes and the Gulf was almost solidly filled in, and finally, in 1820, by the admission of Missouri, the Union held within its borders a political body whose whole territory lay to the west of the Mississippi.

All the men who founded these States were of much the same type; they were rough frontiersmen, of strong will and adventurous temper, accustomed to the hard, barren, and yet strangely fascinating life of those who dwell as pioneers in the wilderness. Moreover, they

were nearly all of the same blood. The people of New York and New England were as yet filling out their own territory; it was not till many years afterward that their stock became the predominant one in the northwestern country. Most of the men who founded the new States north of the Ohio came originally from the old States south of the Potomac; Virginia and North Carolina were the first of the original thirteen to thrust forth their children in masses, that they might shift for themselves in the then untrodden West.

But though these early Western pioneers were for the most part of Southern stock, they were by no means of the same stamp as the men who then and thereafter formed the ruling caste in the old slaveholding States. They were the mountaineers, the men of the foot-hills and uplands, who lived in what were called the back-water counties. Many of them were themselves of Northern origin. In striking contrast to the somewhat sluggish and peaceful elements going to make up the rest of its heterogeneous population, Pennsylvania also originally held within its boundaries many members of that most fiery and restless race, the Scotch-Irish. These naturally drew toward the wilder, western parts of the State, settling along the slopes of the numerous inland mountain ridges running parallel to the Atlantic coast; and from thence they drifted southward through the long valleys, until they met and mingled with their kinsfolk of Virginia and the Carolinas, when the movement again trended toward the West. In a generation or two, all, whether their forefathers were English, Scotch, Irish, or, as was often the case, German and Huguenot, were welded into one people; and in a very short time the stern and hard surroundings of their life had hammered this people into a peculiar and charac-

teristically American type, which to this day remains almost unchanged. In their old haunts we still see the same tall, gaunt men, with strongly marked faces and saturnine, resolute eyes; men who may pass half their days in listless idleness, but who are also able to show on occasion the fiercest intensity of purpose and the most sustained energy of action. We see them, moreover, in many places, even across to the Pacific coast and down to the Rio Grande. For after thronging through the gaps and passes of the Appalachians, and penetrating the forest region to the outskirts of the treeless country beyond, the whilom mountaineers and woodsmen, the wielders of the axe and rifle, then streamed off far to the West and South and even to the Northwest, their lumbering, white-topped wagons being, even to the present moment, a familiar sight to those who travel over the prairies and the great plains; while it is their descendants who, in the saddle instead of afoot, and with rope and revolver instead of axe and rifle, now form the bulk of the reckless horsemen who spend their lives in guarding the wandering cattle-herds that graze over the vast, arid plains of the "far West."

The method of settlement of these States of the Mississippi valley had nothing whatever in common with the way in which California and the Australian colonies were suddenly filled up by the promiscuous overflow of a civilized population, which had practically no fear of any resistance from the stunted and scanty native races. It was far more closely akin to the tribe movements of the Germanic peoples in time past; to that movement, for example, by which the Juttish and Low Dutch sea-thieves on the coast of Britain worked their way inland at the cost of the Cymric Celts. The early settlers of the territory lying immediately west of the Alleghanies

were all of the same kind; they were in search of homes, not of riches, and their actions were planned accordingly, except in so far as they were influenced by mere restless love of adventure and excitement. Individuals and single families, of course, often started off by themselves; but for the most part the men moved in bands, with their wives and their children, their cattle and their few household goods; each settler being from the necessity of the case also a fighter, ready, and often forced, to do desperate battle in defense of himself and his family. Where such a band or little party settled, there would gradually grow up a village or small town; for instance, where those renowned pioneers and heroes of the backwoods, Boone and Harrod, first formed permanent settlements after they had moved into Kentucky, now stand the towns of Boonsboro and Harrodsburg.

The country whither these settlers went was not one into which timid men would willingly venture, and the founders of the West were perforce men of stern stuff, who from the very beginning formed a most warlike race. It is impossible to understand aright the social and political life of the section, unless we keep prominently before our minds that it derived its distinguishing traits largely from the extremely militant character acquired by all the early settlers during the long-drawn-out warfare in which the first two generations were engaged. The land was already held by powerful Indian tribes and confederacies, who waged war after war, of the most ferocious and bloody character, against the men of the border, in the effort to avert their inevitable doom, or at least to stem for the time being the invasion of the swelling tide of white settlement. At the present time, when an Indian uprising is a matter chiefly of an-

noyance, and dangerous only to scattered, outlying settlers, it is difficult to realize the formidable nature of the savage Indian wars waged at the end of the last and the beginning of the present centuries. The red nations were then really redoubtable enemies, able to send into the field thousands of well-armed warriors, whose ferocious bravery and skill rendered them quite as formidable antagonists as trained European soldiers would have been. Warfare with them did not affect merely outlying farms or hamlets; it meant a complete stoppage of the white movement westward, and great and imminent danger even to the large communities already in existence; a state of things which would have to continue until the armies raised among the pioneers were able, in fair shock of battle, to shatter the strength of their red foes. The victories of Wayne and Harrison were conditions precedent to the opening of the Ohio valley; Kentucky was won by a hundred nameless and bloody fights, whose heroes, like Shelby and Sevier, afterward rose to prominent rank in civil life; and it was only after a hard-fought campaign and slaughtering victories that the Tennesseeans were able to break the power of the great Creek confederacy, which was thrust in between them and what were at that time the French and Spanish lands lying to the south and southwest.

The founders of our Western States were valiant warriors as well as hardy pioneers, and from the very first their fighting was not confined to uncivilized foes. It was they who at Kings Mountain slew gallant Ferguson, and completely destroyed his little army; it was from their ranks that most of Morgan's men were recruited, when that grizzled old bush-fighter smote Tarleton so roughly at the battle of the Cowpens. These two blows crippled Cornwallis, and were among

the chief causes of his final overthrow. At last, during the War of 1812, there was played out the final act in the military drama of which the West had been the stage during the lifetime of a generation. For this war had a twofold aspect: on the seaboard it was regarded as a contest for the rights of our sailors and as a revolt against Great Britain's domineering insolence; west of the mountains, on the other hand, it was simply a renewal on a large scale of the Indian struggles, all the red-skinned peoples joining together in a great and last effort to keep the lands which were being wrested from them; and there Great Britain's part was chiefly that of ally to the savages, helping them with her gold and with her well-drilled mercenary troops. The battle of the Thames is memorable rather because of the defeat and death of Tecumseh, than because of the flight of Proctor and the capture of his British regulars; and for the opening of the Southwest the ferocious fight at the Horseshoe Bend was almost as important as the far more famous conflict of New Orleans.

The War of 1812 brought out conspicuously the solidarity of interest in the West. The people there were then all pretty much of the same blood; and they made common cause against outsiders in the military field exactly as afterward they for some time acted together politically. Further eastward, on the Niagara frontier, the fighting was done by the troops of New York and New England, unassisted by the Southern States; and in turn the latter had to shift for themselves when Washington was burned and Baltimore menaced. It was far otherwise in the regions lying beyond the Appalachians. Throughout all the fighting in the Northwest, where Ohio was the State most menaced, the troops of Kentucky formed the bulk of the American army, and it

was the charge of their mounted riflemen which at a blow won the battle of the Thames. Again, on that famous January morning, when it seemed as if the fair Creole city was already in Packenham's grasp, it was the wild soldiery of Tennessee who, lolling behind their mud breastworks, peered out through the lifting fog at the scarlet array of the English veterans, as the latter, fresh from their long and unbroken series of victories over the best troops of Europe, advanced, for the first time, to meet defeat.

This solidarity of interest and feeling on the part of the trans-Appalachian communities is a factor often not taken into account in relating the political history of the early part of this century; most modern writers (who keep forgetting that the question of slavery was then not one-tenth as absorbing as it afterward became) apparently deeming that the line of demarcation between North and South was at that period, as it has since in reality become, as strongly defined west of the mountains as east of them. That such was not the case was due to several different causes. The first comers into Tennessee and Kentucky belonged to the class of so-called poor whites, who owned few or no slaves, and who were far less sectionally Southern in their feelings than were the rich planters of the low, alluvial plains toward the coast of the Atlantic; and though a slave-owning population quickly followed the first pioneers, yet the latter had imprinted a stamp on the character of the two States which was never wholly effaced—as witness the tens of thousands of soldiers which both, even the more southern of the two, furnished to the Union army in the Civil War.

If this immigration made Kentucky and Tennessee, and afterward Missouri, less distinctively Southern in

character than the South Atlantic States, it at the same time, by furnishing the first and for some time the most numerous element in the population of the States north of the Ohio, made the latter less characteristically Northern than was the case with those lying east of them. Up to 1810 Indiana kept petitioning Congress to allow slavery within her borders; Illinois, in the early days, felt as hostile toward Massachusetts as did Missouri. Moreover, at first the Southern States west of the mountains greatly outweighed the Northern, both in numbers and importance.

Thus several things came about. In the first place, all the communities across the Alleghanies originally felt themselves to be closely knit together by ties of blood, sentiment, and interest; they felt that they were, taking them altogether, Western as opposed to Eastern. In the next place, they were at first Southern rather than Northern in their feeling. But, in the third place, they were by no means so extremely Southern as were the Southern Atlantic States. This was the way in which they looked at themselves; and this was the way in which at that time others looked at them. In our day Kentucky is regarded politically as being simply an integral portion of the solid South; but the greatest of her sons, Clay, was known to his own generation, not as a Southern statesman, but as "Harry of the West." Of the two Presidents, Harrison and Taylor, whom the Whigs elected, one lived in Ohio and one in Louisiana; but both were chosen simply as Western men, and, as a matter of fact, both were born in Virginia. Andrew Jackson's victory over Adams was in some slight sense a triumph of the South over the North, but it was far more a triumph of the West over the East. Webster's famous sneer at old Zachary Taylor was aimed at him

as a "frontier colonel"; in other words, though Taylor had a large plantation in Louisiana, Webster, and many others besides, looked upon him as the champion of the rough democracy of the West rather than as the representative of the polished slaveholders of the South.

Thus, during the first part of this century, the term "Western" was as applicable to the States lying south of the Ohio as to those lying north of it. Moreover, at first the Central, or, as they were more usually termed, the Border States, were more populous and influential than were those on either side of them, and so largely shaped the general tone of Western feeling. While the voters in these States, whether Whigs or Democrats, accepted as their leaders men like Clay in Kentucky, Benton in Missouri, and Andrew Jackson in Tennessee, it could be taken for granted that on the whole they felt for the South against the North, but much more for the West against the East, and most strongly of all for the Union as against any section whatsoever. Many influences came together to start and keep alive this feeling; but one, more potent than all the others combined, was working steadily, and with ever-increasing power, against it; and when slavery finally brought about a break between the Northern and Southern States of the West as complete as that in the East, then the Democrats of the stamp of Jackson and Benton disappeared as completely from public life as did the Whigs of the stamp of Clay.

Benton's long political career can never be thoroughly understood unless it is kept in mind that he was primarily a Western and not a Southern statesman; and it owes its especial interest to the fact that during its continuance the West first rose to power, acting as a unit, and to the further fact that it was brought to a close

by the same causes which soon afterward broke up the West exactly as the East was already broken. Benton was not one of the few statesmen who have left the indelible marks of their own individuality upon our history; but he was, perhaps, the most typical representative of the statesmanship of the Middle West at the time when the latter gave the tone to the political thought of the entire Mississippi valley. The political school which he represented came to its fullest development in the so-called Border States of Kentucky, Tennessee, and Missouri, and swayed the destinies of the West so long as the States to the north as well as the States to the south were content to accept the leadership of those that lay between them. It came to an end and disappeared from sight when people north of the Ohio at last set up their own standard, and when, after some hesitation, the Border States threw in their lot with the other side and concluded to follow the Southern communities, which they had hitherto led. Benton was one of those public men who formulate and express, rather than shape, the thought of the people who stand behind them and whom they represent. A man of strong intellect and keen energy, he was for many years the foremost representative of at least one phase of that thought; being, also, a man of high principle and determined courage, when a younger generation had grown up and the bent of the thought had changed, he declined to change with it, bravely accepting political defeat as the alternative, and going down without flinching a hair's breadth from the ground on which he had always stood.

To understand his public actions as well as his political ideas and principles it is, of course, necessary to know at least a little of the men among whom he lived

and from whom he sprang: the men who were the first of our people to press out beyond the limits of the thirteen old States; who filled Kentucky, Tennessee, Arkansas, and Missouri, and who for so long a time were the dominant class all through the West, until, at last, the flood of northeastern immigration completely swamped their influence north of the Ohio, while along the Gulf coast the political control slipped from their hands into the grasp of the great planter class.

The wood choppers, game hunters, and Indian fighters, who first came over the mountains, were only the forerunners of the more regular settlers who followed them; but these last had much the same attributes as their predecessors. For many years after the settlements were firmly rooted, the life of the settlers was still subject to all the perils of the wilderness. Above all, the constant warfare in which they were engaged for nearly thirty-five years, and which culminated in the battle of New Orleans, left a deep and lasting imprint on their character. Their incessant wars were waged almost wholly by the settlers themselves, with comparatively little help from the federal government, and with hardly any regular troops as allies. A backwoods levy, whether raised to meet an Indian inroad or to march against the disciplined armies of the British, was merely a force of volunteers, made up from among the full-grown male settlers, who were induced to join either from motives of patriotism, or from love of adventure, or because they felt that their homes and belongings were in danger from which they could only extricate them by their own prowess. Every settler thus became more or less of a soldier, was always expert with the rifle, and was taught to rely upon his own skill and courage for his protection. But the military

service in which he was from time to time engaged was of such a lawless kind, and was carried on with such utter absence of discipline, that it did not accustom him in the least to habits of self-command, or render him inclined to brook the exercise of authority by an outsider; so that the Western people grew up with warlike traditions and habits of thought, accustomed to give free rein to their passions, and to take into their own hands the avenging of real or supposed wrongs, but without any of the love for order and for acting in concert with their fellows which characterize those who have seen service in regular armies. On the contrary, the chief effect of this long-continued and harassing border warfare was to make more marked the sullen and almost defiant self-reliance of the pioneer, and to develop his peculiarly American spirit of individual self-sufficiency, his impatience of outside interference or control, to a degree not known elsewhere, even on this continent. It also gave a distinct military cast to his way of looking at territory which did not belong to him. He stood where he was because he was a conqueror; he had wrested his land by force from its rightful Indian lords; he fully intended to repeat the same feat as soon as he should reach the Spanish lands lying to the west and southwest; he would have done so in the case of French Louisiana if it had not been that the latter was purchased, and was thus saved from being taken by force of arms. This belligerent, or, more properly speaking, piratical way of looking at neighboring territory, was very characteristic of the West, and was at the root of the doctrine of "manifest destiny."

All the early settlers, and most of those who came after them, were poor, living narrow lives fraught with great hardship, and varying between toil and half-aim-

less roving; even when the conditions of their life became easier it was some time before the influence of their old existence ceased to make itself felt in their way of looking at things. The first pioneers were, it is true, soon followed by great slave-owners; and by degrees there grew up a clan of large landed proprietors and stock-raisers, akin to the planter caste which was so all-powerful along the coast; but it was never relatively either so large or so influential as the latter, and was not separated from the rest of the white population by anything like so wide a gap as that which, in the Southern Atlantic and Gulf States, marked the difference between the rich growers of cotton, rice, and sugar, and the squalid "poor whites" or "crackers."

The people of the Border States were thus mainly composed of small landowners, scattered throughout the country; they tilled their small farms for themselves, were hewers of their own wood, and drawers of their own water, and for generations remained accustomed to and skilful in the use of the rifle. The pioneers of the Middle West were not dwellers in towns; they kept to the open country, where each man could shift for himself without help or hindrance from his neighbors, scorning the irksome restraints and the lack of individual freedom of city life. They built but few cities of any size; the only two really important ones of whose inhabitants they formed any considerable part, St. Louis and New Orleans, were both founded by the French long before our people came across the mountains into the Mississippi valley. Their life was essentially a country life, alike for the rich and for the bulk of the population. The few raw frontier towns and squalid, straggling villages were neither seats of superior culture nor yet centres for the distribution of educated

thought, as in the North. Large tracts of land remained always populated by a class of backwoodsmen differing but little from the first comers. Such was the district from which grand, simple old Davy Crockett went to Washington as a Whig congressman; and perhaps there was never a quainter figure in our national legislature than that of the grim old rifleman, who shares with Daniel Boone the honor of standing foremost in the list of our mighty hunters. Crockett and his kind had little in common with the men who ruled supreme in the politics of most of the Southern States; and even at this day many of their descendants in the wooded mountain land are Republicans; for when the Middle States had lost the control of the West, and when those who had hitherto followed such leaders as Jackson, Clay, and Benton drifted with the tide that set so strongly to the South, it was only the men of the type of dogged, stubborn old Crockett who dared to make head against it. But, indeed, one of the characteristics of the people with whom we are dealing was the slowness and suspicion with which they received a new idea, and the tenacity with which they clung to one that they had at last adopted.

They were above all a people of strong, virile character, certain to make their weight felt either for good or for evil. They had many virtues which can fairly be called great, and their faults were equally strongly marked. They were not a thrifty people, nor one given to long-sustained, drudging work; there were not then, nor are there now, to be found in this land such comfortable, prosperous homes and farms as those which dot all the country where dwell the men of northeastern stock. They were not, as a rule, even ordinarily well educated; the public school formed no such important

feature in their life as it did in the life of their fellow citizens farther north. They had narrow, bitter prejudices and dislikes; the hard and dangerous lives they had led had run their character into a stern and almost forbidding mould. They valued personal prowess very highly, and respected no man who did not possess the strongest capacity for self-help, and who could not shift for himself in any danger. They felt an intense, although perhaps ignorant, pride in and love for their country, and looked upon all the lands hemming in the United States as territory which they or their children should some day inherit; for they were a race of masterful spirit, and accustomed to regard with easy tolerance any but the most flagrant violations of law. They prized highly such qualities as courage, loyalty, truth, and patriotism, but they were, as a whole, poor, and not overscrupulous of the rights of others, nor yet with the nicest sense of money obligations; so that the history of their State legislation affecting the rights of debtor and creditor, whether public or private, in hard times, is not pleasant reading for an American who is proud of his country. Their passions, once roused, were intense, and if they really wished anything they worked for it with indomitable persistency. There was little that was soft or outwardly attractive in their character: it was stern, rude, and hard, like the lives they led; but it was the character of those who were every inch men, and who were Americans through to the very heart's core.

In their private lives their lawless and arrogant freedom and lack of self-restraint produced much gross licentiousness and barbarous cruelty; and every little frontier community could tell its story of animal savagery as regards the home relations of certain of its members. Yet in spite of this they, as a whole, felt the

family ties strongly, and in the main had quite a high standard of private morality. Many of them, at any rate, were, according to their lights, deeply and sincerely religious; though even their religion showed their strong, coarse-fibred, narrow natures. Episcopalianism was the creed of the rich slave-owner, who dwelt along the seaboard; but the Western settlers belonged to some one or other of the divisions of the great Methodist and Baptist churches. They were as savagely in earnest about this as about everything else; meekness, mildness, broad liberality, and gentle tolerance of difference in religious views were not virtues they appreciated. They were always ready to do battle for their faith, and, indeed, had to do it, as it was quite a common amusement for the wilder and more lawless members of the community to try to break up by force the great camp-meetings, which formed so conspicuous a feature in the social and religious life of the country. For even irreligion took the form of active rebellion against God, rather than disbelief in his existence.

Physically they were, and are, especially in Kentucky, the finest members of our race; an examination of the statistics relating to the volunteers in the Civil War shows that the natives of no other State, and the men from no foreign country whatsoever, came up to them in bodily development.

Such a people, in choosing men to represent them in the national councils, would naturally pay small heed to refined, graceful, and cultivated statesmanship; their allegiance would be given to men of abounding vitality, of rugged intellect, and of indomitable will. No better or more characteristic possessor of these attributes could be imagined than Thomas Benton.

CHAPTER II

BENTON'S EARLY LIFE AND ENTRY INTO THE SENATE

Thomas Hart Benton was born on March 14, 1782, near Hillsborough, in Orange County, North Carolina —the same State that fifteen years before, almost to a day, had seen the birth of the great political chief whose most prominent supporter he in after life became. Benton, however, came of good colonial stock; and his early surroundings were not characterized by the squalid poverty that marked Jackson's, though the difference in the social condition of the two families was of small consequence on the frontier, where caste was, and is, almost unknown, and social equality is not a mere figure of speech—particularly it was not so at that time in the Southwest, where there were no servants, except black slaves, and where even what in the North would be called "hired help" was almost an unknown quantity.

Benton's father, who was a lawyer in good standing at the North Carolina bar, died when the boy was very young, leaving him to be brought up by his Virginian mother. She was a woman of force, and, for her time, of much education. She herself began the training of her son's mind, studying with him history and biography, while he also, of course, had access to his father's law library. The home in which he was brought up was, for that time and for that part of the country, strait-laced; his mother, though a Virginian, had many traits which belonged rather to the descendants of the

Puritans, and possessed both their strength of character and their austerely religious spirit. Although living in a roistering age, among a class peculiarly given to all the coarser kinds of pleasure, and especially to drink and every form of gambling, she nevertheless preserved the most rigid decorum and morality in her own household, frowning especially upon all intemperance, and never permitting a pack of cards to be found within her doors. She was greatly beloved and respected by the son, whose mind she did so much to mould, and she lived to see him become one of the foremost statesmen of the country.

Young Benton was always fond of reading. He began his studies at home, and continued them at a grammar-school taught by a young New Englander of good ability, a very large proportion of the school-teachers of the country then coming from New England; indeed, school-teachers and peddlers were, on the whole, the chief contributions made by the Northeast to the *personnel* of the new Southwest. Benton then began a course at Chapel Hill, the University of North Carolina, but broke off before completing it, as his mother decided to move her family westward to the almost unbroken wilderness near Nashville, Tennessee, where his father had left them a large tract of land. But he was such an insatiable student and reader that he rapidly acquired a very extensive knowledge, not only of law, but of history and even of Latin and English literature, and thus became a well-read and cultivated, indeed a learned, man; though his frequent displays of learning and knowledge were sometimes marked by a trace of that self-complacent, amusing pedantry so apt to characterize a really well-educated man who lives in a community in which he believes, and with which he has

thoroughly identified himself, but whose members are for the most part below the average in mental cultivation.

The Bentons founded a little town named after them, and in which, of course, they took their position as leaders and rich landed proprietors. It lay on the very outskirts of the Indian country; indeed, the great war trail of the Southern Indians led right through the settlement, and they at all times swarmed around it. The change from the still somewhat rude civilization of North Carolina to the wildness on the border was far less abrupt and startling then than would be the case under similar circumstances now, and the Bentons soon identified themselves completely with the life and interests of the people around them. They even abandoned the Episcopalianism of their old home, and became Methodists, like their neighbors. Young Benton himself had his hands full, at first, in attending to his great backwoods farm, tilled by slaves, and in pushing the growth of the settlement by building first a rude log schoolhouse (he himself taught school at one time, while studying law), and a meeting-house of the same primitive construction, then mills, roads, bridges, and so forth. The work hardened and developed him, and he readily enough turned into a regular frontiersman of the better and richer sort. The neighboring town of Nashville was a raw, pretentious place, where horse-racing, cock-fighting, gambling, whiskey-drinking, and the various coarse vices which masquerade as pleasures in frontier towns, all throve in rank luxuriance. It was somewhat of a change from Benton's early training, but he took to it kindly, and though never a vicious or debauched man, he bore his full share in the savage brawls, the shooting and stabbing affrays, which went to make

up one of the leading features in the excessively unattractive social life of the place and epoch.

At that time duelling prevailed more or less throughout the United States, and in the South and West to an extent never before or since attained. On the frontier, not only did every man of spirit expect now and then to be called on to engage in a duel, but he also had to make up his mind to take occasional part in bloody street fights. Tennessee, the State where Benton then had his home, was famous for the affrays that took place within its borders; and that they were common enough among the people at large may be gathered from the fact that they were of continual occurrence among judges, high State officials, and in the very legislature itself, where senators and assemblymen were always becoming involved in undignified rows and foolish squabbles, apparently without fear of exciting any unfavorable comment, as witness Davy Crockett's naïve account of his early experiences as a backwoods member of the Tennessee assembly. Like Jackson, Benton killed his man in a duel. This was much later, in 1817, when he was a citizen of Missouri. His opponent was a lawyer named Lucas. They fought twice, on Bloody Island, near St. Louis. On the first occasion both were wounded; on the second Lucas was killed. The latter came of a truculent family. A recent biographer of his father, Judge John R. Lucas, remarks, with refreshing unconsciousness of the grotesque humor of the chronicle: "This gentleman was one of the most remarkable men who ever settled west of the Mississippi River. . . . Toward the close of his life Judge Lucas became melancholy and dejected—the result of domestic affliction, for six of his sons met death by violence." One feels curious to know how the other sons died.

But the most famous of Benton's affrays was that with Jackson himself, in 1813. This rose out of a duel of laughable rather than serious character, in which Benton's brother was worsted by General Carroll, afterward one of Jackson's lieutenants at New Orleans. The encounter itself took place between the Benton brothers on one side, and on the other, Jackson, General Coffee, also of New Orleans fame, and another friend. The place was a great rambling Nashville inn, and the details were so intricate that probably not even the participants themselves knew exactly what had taken place, while all the witnesses impartially contradicted each other and themselves. At any rate, Jackson was shot and Benton was pitched headlong down-stairs, and all the other combatants were more or less damaged; but it ended in Jackson being carried off by his friends, leaving the Bentons masters of the field, where they strutted up and down and indulged in a good deal of loud bravado. Previous to this Benton and Jackson had been on the best of terms, and although there was naturally a temporary break in their friendship, yet it proved strong enough in the end to stand even such a violent wrench as that given by this preposterously senseless and almost fatal brawl. They not only became completely reconciled, but eventually even the closest and warmest of personal and political friends; for Benton was as generous and forgiving as he was hot-tempered, and Jackson's ruder nature was at any rate free from any small meanness or malice.

In spite of occasional interludes of this kind, which must have given a rather ferocious fillip to his otherwise monotonous life, Benton completed his legal studies, was admitted to the bar, and began to practise as a frontier lawyer at Franklin. Very soon, however, he

for the first time entered the more congenial field of politics, and in 1811 served a single term in the lower house of the Tennessee legislature. Even thus early he made his mark. He had a bill passed introducing the circuit system into the State judiciary, a reform of much importance, especially to the poorer class of litigants; and he also introduced, and had enacted into a law, a bill providing that a slave should have the same right to the full benefit of a jury trial as would a white man suffering under the same accusation. This last measure is noteworthy as foreshadowing the position which Benton afterward took in national politics, where he appeared as a slaveholder, it is true, but as one of the most enlightened and least radical of his class. Its passage also showed the tendency of Southern opinion at the time, which was undoubtedly in the direction of bettering the condition of the blacks, though the events of the next few years produced such a violent revulsion of feeling concerning the negro race that this current of public opinion was completely reversed. Benton, however, was made of sturdy stuff, and as he grew older his views on the question did not alter as did those of most of his colleagues.

Shortly after he left the legislature the War of 1812 broke out, and its events impressed on Benton another of what soon became his cardinal principles. The war was brought on by the South and West, the Democrats all favoring it, while the Federalists, forming the then anti-Democratic party, especially in the Northeast, opposed it; and finally their more extreme members, at the famous Hartford Convention, passed resolutions supposed to tend toward the dissolution of the Union, and which brought upon the party the bitter condemnation of their antagonists. Says Benton himself: "At

the time of its first appearance the right of secession was repulsed and repudiated by the Democracy generally. . . . The leading language in respect to it south of the Potomac was that no State had a right to withdraw from the Union, . . . and that any attempt to dissolve it, or to obstruct the action of constitutional laws, was treason. If since that time political parties and sectional localities have exchanged attitudes on this question, it cannot alter the question of right." For, having once grasped an idea and made it his own, Benton clung to it with unyielding tenacity, no matter whether it was or was not abandoned by the majority of those with whom he had been in the habit of acting.

Thus early Benton's political character became moulded into the shape which it ever afterward retained. He was a slaveholder, but as advanced as a slaveholder could be; he remained to a certain extent a Southerner, but his Southernism was of the type prevalent immediately after the Revolution, and not of the kind that came to the fore prior to the Rebellion. He was much more a Westerner in his feelings, and more than all else he was emphatically a Union man.

Like every other hot spirit of the West—and the West was full of little but hot spirits—Benton heartily favored the War of 1812. He served as a colonel of volunteers under Jackson, but never saw actual fighting, and his short term of soldiership was of no further account than to furnish an excuse to Polk, thirty-five years later, for nominating him commanding general in the time of the Mexican War—an incident which, as the nomination was rejected, may be regarded as merely ludicrous, the gross impropriety of the act safely defying criticism. He was of genuine use, however, in calling on and exciting the volunteers to come forward; for

he was a fluent speaker, of fine presence, and his pompous self-sufficiency was rather admired than otherwise by the frontiersmen, while his force, energy, and earnestness commanded their respect. He also, when Jackson's reckless impetuosity got him into a snarl with the feeble national administration, whose imbecile incapacity to carry on the war became day by day more painfully evident, went to Washington, and there finally extricated his chief by dint of threatening that, if "justice" was not done him, Tennessee would, in future political contests, be found ranged with the administration's foes. For Benton already possessed political influence, and being, like most of his class, anti-Federalist, or Democratic, in sentiment, was therefore of the same party as the people at Washington, and was a man whose representations would have some weight with them.

During his stay in Tennessee Benton's character was greatly influenced by his being thrown into close contact with many of the extraordinary men who then or afterward made their mark in the strange and picturesque annals of the Southwest. Jackson even thus early loomed up as the greatest and arch-typical representative of his people and his section. The religious bent of the time was shown in the life of the grand, rugged old Methodist, Peter Cartwright, who, in the far-off backwoods, was a preacher and practical exponent of "muscular Christianity" half a century before the day when, under Bishop Selwyn and Charles Kingsley, it became a cult among the most highly civilized classes of England. There was David Crockett, rifleman and congressman, doomed to a tragic and heroic death in that remarkable conflict of which it was said at the time, that "Thermopylæ had its messengers of death, but the

Alamo had none"; and there was Houston, who, after a singular and romantic career, became the greatest of the statesmen and soldiers of Texas. It was these men, and their like, who, under the shadow of world-old forests and in the sunlight of the great, lonely plains, wrought out the destinies of a nation and a continent, and who, with their rude war-craft and statecraft, solved problems that, in the importance of their results, dwarf the issues of all European struggles since the day of Waterloo as completely as the Punic wars in their outcome threw into the shade the consequences of the wars waged at the same time between the different Greek monarchies.

Benton, in his mental training, came much nearer to the statesmen of the seaboard, and was far better bred and better educated, than the rest of the men around him. But he was, and was felt by them to be, thoroughly one of their number, and the most able expounder of their views; and it is just because he is so completely the type of a great and important class, rather than because even of his undoubted and commanding ability as a statesman, that his life and public services will always repay study. His vanity and boastfulness were faults which he shared with almost all his people; and, after all, if they overrated the consequence of their own deeds, the deeds, nevertheless, did possess great importance, and their fault was slight compared to that committed by some of us at the present day, who have gone to the opposite extreme and try to belittle the actions of our fathers. Benton was deeply imbued with the masterful, overbearing spirit of the West—a spirit whose manifestations are not always agreeable, but the possession of which is certainly a most healthy sign of the virile strength of a young community. He thor-

oughly appreciated that he was helping to shape the future of a country, whose wonderful development is the most important feature in the history of the nineteenth century; the non-appreciation of which fact is in itself sufficient utterly to disqualify any American statesman from rising to the first rank.

It was not in Tennessee, however, that Benton rose to political prominence, for shortly after the close of the war he crossed the Mississippi and made his permanent home in the Territory of Missouri. Missouri was then our extreme western outpost, and its citizens possessed the characteristic Western traits to an even exaggerated extent. The people were pushing, restless, and hardy; they were lawless and violent to a degree. In spite of the culture and education of some families, society, as a whole, was marked by florid unconventionality and rawness. The general and wide-spread intemperance of the judges and high officials of state was even more marked than their proclivities for brawling. The lawyers, as usual, furnished the bulk of the politicians; success at the bar depended less upon learning than upon "push" and audacity. The fatal feuds between individuals and families were as frequent and as bloody as among Highland clans a century before. The following quotations are taken at random from a work on the Bench and Bar of Missouri, by an ex-judge of its supreme court: "A man by the name of Hiram K. Turk, and four sons, settled in 1839 near Warsaw, and a personal difficulty occurred between them and a family of the name of Jones, resulting in the death of one or two. The people began to take sides with one or the other, and finally a general outbreak took place, in which many were killed, resulting in a general reign of terror and of violence beyond the power of the law to subdue." The

social annals of this pleasant town of Warsaw could not normally have been dull; in 1844, for instance, they were enlivened by Judge Cherry and Senator Major fighting to the death on one of its principal streets, the latter being slain. The judges themselves were by no means bigoted in their support of law and order. "In those days it was common for people to settle their quarrels during court week. . . . Judge Allen took great delight in these exhibitions, and would at any time adjourn his court to witness one. . . . He (Allen) always travelled with a holster of large pistols in front of his saddle, and a knife with a blade at least a foot long." Hannibal Chollop was no mere creature of fancy; on the contrary, his name was legion, and he flourished rankly in every town throughout the Mississippi valley. But, after all, this ruffianism was really not a whit worse in its effects on the national character than was the case with certain of the "universal peace" and "non-resistance" developments in the northeastern States; in fact, it was more healthy. A class of professional non-combatants is as hurtful to the real, healthy growth of a nation as is a class of fire-eaters; for a weakness or folly is nationally as bad as a vice, or worse; and, in the long run, a Quaker may be quite as undesirable a citizen as is a duellist. No man who is not willing to bear arms and to fight for his rights can give a good reason why he should be entitled to the privilege of living in a free community. The decline of the militant spirit in the Northeast during the first half of this century was much to be regretted. To it is due, more than to any other cause, the undoubted average individual inferiority of the Northern compared to the Southern troops; at any rate, at the beginning of the great war of the Rebellion. The Southerners, by their

whole mode of living, their habits, and their love of outdoor sports, kept up their warlike spirit; while in the North the so-called upper classes developed along the lines of a wealthy and timid bourgeoisie type, measuring everything by a mercantile standard (a peculiarly debasing one if taken purely by itself), and submitting to be ruled in local affairs by low foreign mobs, and in national matters by their arrogant Southern kinsmen. The militant spirit of these last certainly stood them in good stead in the Civil War. The world has never seen better soldiers than those who followed Lee; and their leader will undoubtedly rank as without any exception the very greatest of all the great captains that the English-speaking peoples have brought forth—and this, although the last and chief of his antagonists may himself claim to stand as the full equal of Marlborough and Wellington.

The other Western States still kept touch on the old colonial communities of the seacoast, having a second or alternative outlet through Louisiana, newly acquired by the United States, it is true, but which was nevertheless an old settled land. Missouri, however, had lost all connection with the seacoast, and though, through her great river towns, swarming with raftsmen and flatboatmen, she drove her main and most thriving trade with the other Mississippi cities, yet her restless and adventure-loving citizens were already seeking other outlets for their activity, and were establishing trade relations with the Mexicans; being thus the earliest among our people to come into active contact with the Hispano-Indian race from whom we afterward wrested so large a part of their inheritance. Missouri was thrust out beyond the Mississippi into the vast plains country of the far West, and except on the river front was com-

pletely isolated, being flanked on every side by great stretches of level wilderness, inhabited by roaming tribes of warlike Indians. Thus for the first time the borderers began to number in their ranks plainsmen as well as backwoodsmen. In such a community there were sure to be numbers of men anxious to take part in any enterprise that united the chance of great pecuniary gain with the certainty of even greater personal risk, and both these conditions were fulfilled in the trading expeditions pushed out from Missouri across the trackless wastes lying between it and the fringe of Mexican settlements on the Rio del Norte. The route followed by these caravans, which brought back furs and precious metals, soon became famous under the name of the Santa Fé trail; and the story of the perils, hardships, and gains of the adventurous traders who followed it would make one of the most striking chapters of American history.

Among such people Benton's views and habits of thought became more markedly Western and ultra-American than ever, especially in regard to our encroachments upon the territory of neighboring powers. The general feeling in the West upon this last subject afterward crystallized into what became known as the "Manifest Destiny" idea, which, reduced to its simplest terms, was: that it was our manifest destiny to swallow up the land of all adjoining nations who were too weak to withstand us; a theory that forthwith obtained immense popularity among all statesmen of easy international morality. It cannot be too often repeated that no one can understand even the domestic, and more especially the foreign, policy of Benton and his school without first understanding the surroundings amidst which they had been brought up and the people whose

chosen representatives they were. Recent historians, for instance, always speak as if our grasping after territory in the Southwest was due solely to the desire of the Southerners to acquire lands out of which to carve new slaveholding States, and as if it was merely a move in the interests of the slave-power. This is true enough so far as the motives of Calhoun, Tyler, and the other public leaders of the Gulf and Southern seaboard States were concerned. But the hearty Western support given to the movement was due to entirely different causes, the chief among them being the fact that the Westerners honestly believed themselves to be indeed created the heirs of the earth, or at least of so much of it as was known by the name of North America, and were prepared to struggle stoutly for the immediate possession of their heritage.

One of Benton's earliest public utterances was in regard to a matter which precisely illustrates this feeling. It was while Missouri was still a Territory, and when Benton, then a prominent member of the St. Louis bar, had by his force, capacity, and power as a public speaker already become well known among his future constituents. The treaty with Spain, by which we secured Florida, was then before the Senate, which body had to consider it several times, owing to the dull irresolution and sloth of the Spanish Government in ratifying it. The bounds it gave us were far too narrow to suit the more fiery Western spirits, and these cheered Benton to the echo when he attacked it in public with fierce vehemence. "The magnificent valley of the Mississippi is ours, with all its fountains, springs, and floods; and woe to the statesman who shall undertake to surrender one drop of its water, one inch of its soil to any foreign power." So he said, his words ringing with the boastful

confidence so well liked by the masterful men of the West, strong in their youth, and proudly conscious of their strength. The treaty was ratified in the Senate, nevertheless, all the old Southern States favoring it, and the only votes at any stage recorded against it being of four Western senators, coming respectively from Ohio, Kentucky, Tennessee, and Louisiana. So that in 1818, at any rate, the desire for territorial aggrandizement at the expense of Spain or Mexico was common to the West as a whole, both to the free and the slave States, and was not exclusively favored by the Southerners. The only effect of Benton's speech was to give rise to the idea that he was hostile to the Southern and Democratic administration at Washington, and against this feeling he had to contend in the course of his successful candidacy for the United States senatorship the following year, when Missouri was claiming admittance to the Union.

It was in reference to this matter of admitting Missouri that the slavery question for the first time made its appearance in national politics, where it threw everything into confusion and for the moment overshadowed all else; though it vanished almost as quickly as it had appeared, and did not again come to the front for several years. The Northerners, as a whole, desiring to "restrict" the growth of slavery and the slave-power, demanded that Missouri, before being admitted as a State, should abolish slavery within her boundaries. The South was equally determined that she should be admitted as a slave State; and for the first time the politicians of the country divided on geographical rather than on party lines, though the division proved but temporary, and was of but little interest except as foreshadowing what was to come a score of years later.

Even within the territory itself the same contest was carried on with the violence bred by political conflicts in frontier States, there being a very respectable "restriction" party, which favored abolition. Benton was himself a slaveholder, and as the question was in no way one between the East and the West, or between the Union as a whole and any part of it, he naturally gave full swing to his Southern feelings, and entered with tremendous vigor into the contest on the anti-restriction side. So successful were his efforts, and so great was the majority of the Missourians who sympathized with him, that the restrictionists were completely routed and succeeded in electing but one delegate to the constitutional convention. In Congress the matter was finally settled by the passage of the famous Missouri Compromise bill, a measure Southern in its origin, but approved at the time by many if not most Northerners, and disapproved by not a few Southerners. Benton heartily believed in it, announcing somewhat vaguely that he was "equally opposed to slavery agitation and to slavery extension." By its terms Missouri was admitted as a slave State, while slavery was abolished in all the rest of the old province of Louisiana lying north and west of it and north of the parallel of 36° 30′. Owing to an objectionable clause in its constitution, the admission was not fully completed until 1821, and then only through the instrumentality of Henry Clay. But Benton took his seat immediately, and entered on his thirty years of service in the United States Senate. His appearance in national politics was thus coincident with the appearance of the question which, it is true, almost immediately sank out of sight for a period of fifteen years, but which then reappeared to stay for good and to become of progressively absorb-

ing importance, until, combining itself with the still greater question of national unity, it dwarfed all other issues, cleft the West as well as the East asunder, and, as one of its minor results, brought about the political downfall of Benton himself and of his whole school in what were called the Border States.

Before entering the Senate, Benton did something which well illustrates his peculiar uprightness, and the care which he took to keep his public acts free from the least suspicion of improper influence. When he was at the bar in St. Louis, real-estate litigation was much the most important branch of legal business. The condition of Missouri land titles was very mixed, since many of them were based upon the thousands of "concessions" of land made by the old French and Spanish governments, which had been ratified by Congress, but subject to certain conditions which the Creole inhabitants, being ignorant and lawless, had generally failed to fulfil. By an act of Congress these inchoate claims were to be brought before the United States recorder of land titles; and the Missouri bar were divided as to what action should be taken on them, the majority insisting that they should be held void, while Benton headed the opposite party, which was averse to forfeiting property on technical grounds, and advocated the confirmation of every honest claim. Further and important legislation was needed to provide for these claims. Benton, being much the most influential member of the bar who had advocated the confirmation of the claims, and being so able, honest, and energetic, was the favorite counsel of the claimants, and had hundreds of their titles under his professional charge. Of course in such cases the compensation of the lawyer depended solely upon his success; and success to Benton would have meant

wealth. Nevertheless, and though his action was greatly to his own pecuniary hurt, the first thing he did when elected senator was to convene his clients, and tell them that henceforth he could have nothing more to do, as their attorney, with the prosecution of their claims, giving as his reason that their success largely depended upon the action of Congress, of which he was now himself a member, so that he was bound to consult, not any private interest, but the good of the community as a whole. He even refused to designate his successor in the causes, saying that he was determined not only to be quite unbiassed in acting upon the subject of these claims as senator, but not to have, nor to be suspected of having, any personal interest in the fate of any of them. Many a modern statesman might most profitably copy his sensitiveness.

CHAPTER III

EARLY YEARS IN THE SENATE

When Benton took his seat in the United States Senate, Monroe, the last President of the great house of Virginia, was about beginning his second term. He was a courteous, high-bred gentleman, of no especial ability, but well fitted to act as presidential figurehead during the politically quiet years of that era of good feeling which lasted from 1816 till 1824. The Federalist party, after its conduct during the war, had vanished into well-deserved obscurity, and though influences of various sorts were working most powerfully to split the dominant and all-embracing Democracy into factional fragments, these movements had not yet come to a head.

The slavery question, it cannot be too often said, was as yet of little or no political consequence. The violent excitement over the admission of Missouri had subsided as quickly as it had arisen; and though the Compromise bill was of immense importance in itself, and still more as giving a hint of what was to come, it must be remembered that its effect upon general politics, during the years immediately succeeding its passage, was slight. Later on, the slavery question became of such paramount consequence, and so completely identified with the movement for the dissolution of the Union, that it seems impossible for even the best of recent historians of American politics to understand that such was not the case at this time. One writer of note even goes so far as to state that "From the night of March 2, 1820, party history is made up without interruption

or break of the development of geographical [the context shows this to mean Northern and Southern] parties." There is very little ground for such a sweeping assertion until a considerable time after the date indicated; indeed, it was more than ten years later before any symptom of the development spoken of became at all marked. Until then, parties divided even less on geographical lines than had been the case earlier, during the last years of the existence of the Federalists; and what little division there was had no reference to slavery. Nor was it till nearly a score of years after the passage of the Missouri Compromise bill that the separatist spirit began to identify itself for good with the idea of the maintenance of slavery. Previously to that there had been outbursts of separatist feeling in different States, but always due to entirely different causes. Georgia flared up in hot defiance of the federal government, when the latter rubbed against her on the question of removing the Cherokees from within her borders. But her having negro slaves did not affect her feelings in the least, and her attitude was just such as any Western State with Indians on its frontier is now apt to assume so far as it dares—such an attitude as Arizona, for example, would at this moment take in reference to the Apaches, if she were able. Slavery was doubtless remotely one of the irritating causes that combined to work South Carolina up to a fever-heat of insanity over the nullification excitement. But in its immediate origin nullification arose from the outcry against the protective tariff, and it is almost as unfair to ascribe it in any way to the influence of slavery as it would be to assign a similar cause for the Virginia and Kentucky resolutions of 1798, or to say that the absence of slavery was the reason for the abortively

disloyal agitation in New England, which culminated in the Hartford Convention. The separatist feeling is ingrained in the fibre of our race, and though in itself a most dangerous failing and weakness, is yet merely a perversion and distortion of the defiant and self-reliant independence of spirit which is one of the chief of the race virtues; and slavery was partly the cause and partly merely the occasion of the abnormal growth of the separatist movement in the South. Nor was the tariff question so intimately associated with that of slavery as has been commonly asserted. This might be easily guessed from the fact that the originator and chief advocate of a high tariff himself came from a slave State, and drew many of his warmest supporters from among the slaveholding sugar-planters. Except in the futile discussion over the proposed Panama Congress it was not till Benton's third senatorial term that slavery became of really great weight in politics.

One of the first subjects that attracted Benton's attention in the Senate was the Oregon question, and on this he showed himself at once in his true character as a Western man, proud alike of every part of his country, and as desirous of seeing the West extended in a northerly as in a southerly direction. Himself a slaveholder, from a slave State, he was one of the earliest and most vehement advocates of the extension of our free territory northward along the Pacific coast. All the country stretching north and south of the Oregon River was then held by the United States in joint possession with Great Britain. But the whole region was still entirely unsettled, and as a matter of fact our British rivals were the only parties in actual occupation. The title to the territory was doubtful, as must always be the case when it rests upon the inaccurate maps of forgotten

explorers, or upon the chance landings of stray sailors and traders, especially if the land in dispute is unoccupied and of vast but uncertain extent, of little present value, and far distant from the powers claiming it. The real truth is that such titles are of very little practical value, and are rightly enough disregarded by any nations strong enough to do so. Benton's intense Americanism, and his pride and confidence in his country and in her unlimited capacity for growth of every sort, gifted him with the power to look much farther into the future, as regarded the expansion of the United States, than did his colleagues; and moreover caused him to consider the question from a much more far-seeing and statesmanlike standpoint. The land belonged to no man, and yet was sure to become very valuable; our title to it was not very good, but was probably better than that of any one else. Sooner or later it would be filled with the overflow of our population, and would border on our dominion, and on our dominion alone. It was therefore just, and moreover in the highest degree desirable, that it should be made a part of that dominion at the earliest possible moment. Benton introduced a bill to enable the President to terminate the arrangement with Great Britain and make a definite settlement in our favor; and though the Senate refused to pass it, yet he had the satisfaction of bringing the subject prominently before the people, and, moreover, of outlining the way in which it would have to be and was finally settled. In one of his speeches on the matter he said, using rather highflown language (for he was unfortunately deficient in sense of humor): "Upon the people of Eastern Asia the establishment of a civilized power on the opposite coast of America could not fail to produce great and wonderful benefits.

Science, liberal principles in government, and the true religion might cast their lights across the intervening sea. The valley of the Columbia might become the granary of China and Japan, and an outlet to their imprisoned and exuberant population." Could he have foreseen how, in the future, the Americans of the valley of the Columbia would greet the "imprisoned and exuberant population" of China, he would probably have been more doubtful as to the willingness of the latter empire to accept our standard of the true religion and liberal principles of government. In the course of the same speech he for the first time, and by what was then considered a bold flight of imagination, suggested the possibility of sending foreign ministers to the Oriental nations, to China, Japan, and Persia, "and even to the Grand Turk."

Better success attended a bill he introduced to establish a trading road from Missouri through the Indian country to New Mexico, which, after much debate, passed both houses and was signed by President Monroe. The road thus marked out and established became, and remained for many years, a great thoroughfare, and among the chief of the channels through which our foreign commerce flowed. Until Benton secured the enactment of this law, so important to the interests and development of the West, the overland trade with Mexico had been carried on by individual effort and at the cost of incalculable hazard, hardship, and risk of life. Mexico, with its gold and silver mines, its strange physical features, its population utterly foreign to us in race, religion, speech, and ways of life, and especially because of the glamour of mystery which surrounded it and partly shrouded it from sight, always dazzled and strongly attracted the minds of the southwesterners,

occupying much the same place in their thoughts that the Spanish Main did in the imagination of England during the reign of Elizabeth. The young men of the Mississippi valley looked upon an expedition with one of the bands of armed traders, who wound their way across Indian-haunted wastes, through deep canyons and over lofty mountain passes, to Santa Fé, Chihuahua, and Sonora, with the same feelings of eager excitement and longing that were doubtless felt by some of their forefathers more than two centuries previously in regard to the cruises of Drake and Hawkins. The long wagon-trains or pack-trains of the traders carried with them all kinds of goods, but especially cotton, and brought back gold and silver bullion, bales of furs and droves of mules; and, moreover, they brought back tales of lawless adventure, of great gains and losses, of fights against Indians and Mexicans, and of triumphs and privations, which still further inflamed the minds of the Western men. Where they had already gone as traders, who could on occasion fight, they all hoped on some future day to go as warriors, who would acquire gain by their conquests. These hopes were openly expressed, and with very little more idea of there being any right or wrong in the matter than so many Norse Vikings might have felt. The southwesterners are credited with altogether too complex motives when it is supposed that they were actuated in regard to the conquest of northern Mexico by a desire to provide for additional slave States to offset the growth of the North; their emotions in regard to their neighbor's land were in the main perfectly simple and purely piratical. That the Northeast did not share in the greed for new territory felt by the other sections of the country was due partly to the decline in its militant spirit (a decline on

many accounts sincerely to be regretted) and partly to its geographical situation, since it adjoined Canada, an unattractive and already well-settled country, jealously guarded by the might of Great Britain.

Another question, on which Benton showed himself to be thoroughly a representative of Western sentiment, was the removal of the Indian tribes. Here he took a most active and prominent part in reporting and favoring the bills, and in advocating the treaties, by which the Indian tribes of the South and West were forced or induced (for the latter word was very frequently used as a euphemistic synonym of the former) to abandon great tracts of territory to the whites and to move farther away from the boundaries of their ever-encroaching civilization. Nor was his action wholly limited to the Senate, for it was at his instance that General Clark, at St. Louis, concluded the treaties with the Kansas and Osage tribes, by which the latter surrendered to the United States all the vast territory which they nominally owned west of Missouri and Arkansas, except small reserves for themselves. Benton, as was to be expected, took the frontier view of the Indian question, which, by the way, though often wrong, is much more apt to be right than is the so-called humanitarian or Eastern view. But, so far as was compatible with having the Indians removed, he always endeavored to have them kindly and humanely treated. There was, of course, much injustice and wrong inevitably attendant upon the Indian policy advocated by him, and by the rest of the Southern and Western statesmen; but it is difficult to see what other course could have been pursued with most of the tribes. In the Western States there were then sixty millions of acres of the best land, owned in great tracts by barbarous or half-barbarous

Indians, who were always troublesome and often dangerous neighbors, and who did not come in any way under the laws of the States in which they lived. The States thus encumbered would evidently never have been satisfied until all their soil was under their own jurisdiction and open to settlement. The Cherokees had advanced far on the road toward civilization, and it was undoubtedly a cruel grief and wrong to take them away from their homes; but the only alternative would have been to deprive them of much of their land, and to provide for their gradually becoming citizens of the States in which they were. For a movement of this sort the times were not then, and, unfortunately, are not yet, ripe.

Much maudlin nonsense has been written about the governmental treatment of the Indians, especially as regards taking their land. For the simple truth is that they had no possible title to most of the lands we took, not even that of occupancy, and at the most were in possession merely by virtue of having butchered the previous inhabitants. For many of its actions toward them the government does indeed deserve the severest criticism; but it has erred quite as often on the side of too much leniency as on the side of too much severity. From the very nature of things, it was wholly impossible that there should not be much mutual wrongdoing and injury in the intercourse between the Indians and ourselves. It was equally out of the question to let them remain as they were, and to bring the bulk of their number up to our standard of civilization with sufficient speed to enable them to accommodate themselves to the changed condition of their surroundings. The policy toward them advocated by Benton, which was much the same as, although more humane than,

that followed by most other Western men who have had practically to face the problem, worked harshly in many instances, and was the cause of a certain amount of temporary suffering. But it was infinitely better for the nation, as a whole, and, in the end, was really more just and merciful, than it would have been to attempt following out any of the visionary schemes which the more impracticable Indian enthusiasts are fond of recommending.

It was during Monroe's last term that Henry Clay brought in the first protective tariff bill, as distinguished from tariff bills to raise revenue with protection as an incident only. It was passed by a curiously mixed vote, which hardly indicated any one's future position on the tariff excepting that of Clay himself; Massachusetts, under the lead of Webster, joining hands with the Southern seacoast States to oppose it, while Tennessee and New York split, and Missouri and Kentucky, together with most of the North, favored it. Benton voted for it, but on the great question of internal improvements he stood out clearly for the views that he ever afterward held. This was first brought up by the veto, on constitutional grounds, of the Cumberland Road bill, which had previously passed both houses with singular unanimity, Benton's vote being one of the very few recorded against it. In regard to all such matters Benton was strongly in favor of a strict construction of the Constitution and of guarding the rights of the States, in spite of his devoted attachment to the Union. While voting against this bill, and denying the power or the right of the federal government to take charge of improvements which would benefit one State only, Benton was nevertheless careful to reserve to himself the right to support measures for improving national

rivers or harbors yielding revenues. The trouble is, that however much the two classes of cases may differ in point of expediency, they overlap so completely that it is wholly impossible to draw a hard and fast line between them, and the question of constitutionality, if waived in the one instance, can scarcely with propriety be raised in the other.

With the close of Monroe's second term the "era of good feeling" came to an end, and the great Democratic-Republican party split up into several fragments, which gradually crystallized round two centres. But in 1824 this process was still incomplete, and the presidential election of that year was a simple scramble between four different candidates—Jackson, Adams, Clay, and Crawford. Jackson had the greatest number of votes, but as no one had a majority, the election was thrown into the House of Representatives, where the Clay men, inasmuch as their candidate was out of the race, went over to Adams and elected him. Benton at the time, and afterward in his "Thirty Years' View," inveighed against this choice as being a violation of what he called the "principle demos krateo"—a barbarous phrase for which he had a great fondness, and which he used and misused on every possible occasion, whether in speaking or writing. He insisted that, as Jackson had secured the plurality of the electoral vote, it was the duty of the House of Representatives to ratify promptly this "choice of the people." The Constitution expressly provided that this need not be done. So Benton, who on questions of States' rights and internal improvements was so pronounced a stickler for a strict construction of the Constitution, here coolly assumed the absurd position that the Constitution was wrong on this particular point, and should be disre-

garded, on the ground that there was a struggle "between the theory of the Constitution and the democratic principle." His proposition was ridiculous. The "democratic principle" had nothing more to do with the matter than had the law of gravitation. Either the Constitution was or it was not to be accepted as a serious document, that meant something; in the former case the election of Adams was proper in every aspect, in the latter it was unnecessary to have held any election at all.

At this period every one was floundering about in efforts to establish political relations, Benton not less than others; for he had begun the canvass as a supporter of Clay, and had then gone over to Crawford. But at the end he had become a Jacksonian Democrat, and during the rest of his political career he figured as the most prominent representative of the Jacksonian Democracy in the Senate. Van Buren himself, afterward Jackson's prime favorite and political heir, was a Crawford man during this campaign.

Adams, after his election, which was owing to Clay's support, gave Clay the position of secretary of state in his Cabinet. The affair unquestionably had an unfortunate look, and the Jacksonians, especially Jackson, at once raised a great hue and cry that there had been a corrupt bargain. Benton, much to his credit, refused to join in the outcry, stating that he had good and sufficient reasons—which he gave—to be sure of its falsity; a position which brought him into temporary disfavor with many of his party associates, and which a man who had Benton's ambition and bitter partisanship, without having his sturdy pluck, would have hesitated to take. The assault was directed with especial bitterness against Clay, whom Jackson ever afterward in-

cluded in the very large list of individuals whom he hated with the most rancorous and unreasoning virulence. Randolph of Roanoke, the privileged eccentric of the Senate, in one of those long harangues in which he touched upon everybody and everything, except possibly the point at issue, made a rabid onslaught upon the Clay-Adams coalition as an alliance of "the blackleg and the Puritan." Clay, who was susceptible enough to the charge of loose living, but who was a man of rigid honor and rather fond than otherwise of fighting, promptly challenged him, and a harmless interchange of shots took place. Benton was on the field as the friend of both parties, and his account of the affair is very amusing in its description of the solemn, hair-splitting punctilio with which it is evident that both Randolph and many of his contemporaries regarded points of duelling honor, which to us seem either absurd, trivial, or wholly incomprehensible.

Two tolerably well-defined parties now emerged from the chaos of contending politicians: one was the party of the administration, whose members called themselves National Republicans, and later on Whigs; the other was the Jacksonian Democracy. Adams's inaugural address and first message outlined the Whig policy as favoring a protective tariff, internal improvements, and a free construction of the Constitution generally. The Jacksonians accordingly took the opposite side on all these points, partly from principle and partly from perversity. In the Senate they assailed with turgid eloquence every administration measure, whether it was good or bad, very much of their opposition being purely factious in character. There has never been a time when there was more rabid, objectless, and unscrupulous display of partisanship. Benton, little to his credit,

was a leader in these purposeless conflicts. The most furious of them took place over the proposed Panama mission. This was a scheme that originated in the fertile brain of Henry Clay, whose Americanism was of a type quite as pronounced as Benton's, and who was always inclined to drag us into a position of hostility to European powers. The Spanish-American States, having succeeded in winning their independence from Spain, were desirous of establishing some principle of concert in action among the American republics as a whole, and for this purpose proposed to hold an international congress at Panama. Clay's fondness for a spirited and spectacular foreign policy made him grasp eagerly at the chance of transforming the United States into the head of an American league of free republics, which would be a kind of cis-Atlantic offset to the Holy Alliance of European despotisms. Adams took up the idea, nominated ministers to the Panama Congress, and gave his reasons for his course in a special message to the Senate. The administration men drew the most rosy and impossible pictures of the incalculable benefits which would be derived from the proposed congress; and the Jacksonians attacked it with an exaggerated denunciation that was even less justified by the facts.

Adams's message was properly open to attack on one or two points; notably in reference to its proposals that we should endeavor to get the Spanish-American States to introduce religious tolerance within their borders. It was certainly an unhappy suggestion that we should endeavor to remove the mote of religious intolerance from our brother's eye while indignantly resenting the least allusion to the beam of slavery in our own. It was on this very point of slavery that the real opposition hinged. The Spanish States had emancipated their

comparatively small negro populations, and, as is usually the case with Latin nations, did not have a very strong caste feeling against the blacks, some of whom accordingly had risen to high civic and military rank; and they also proposed to admit to their congress the negro republic of Hayti. Certain of the slaveholders of the South fiercely objected to any such association; and on this occasion Benton for once led and voiced the ultra-Southern feeling on the subject, announcing in his speech that diplomatic intercourse with Hayti should not even be discussed in the Senate-chamber, and that we could have no association with republics who had "black generals in their armies and mulatto senators in their congresses." But this feeling on the part of the slaveholders against the measure was largely, although not wholly, spurious; and really had less to do with the attitude of the Jacksonian Democrats than had a mere factious opposition to Adams and Clay. This was shown by the vote on the confirmation of the ministers, when the senators divided on party and not on sectional lines. The nominations were confirmed, but not till after such a length of time that the ministers were unable to reach Panama until after the congress had adjourned.

The Oregon question again came up during Adams's term, the administration favoring the renewal of the joint occupation convention, by which we held the country in common with Great Britain. There was not much public feeling in the matter; in the East there was none whatever. But Benton, when he opposed the renewal, and claimed the whole territory as ours, gave expression to the desires of all the Westerners who thought over the subject at all. He was followed by only half a dozen senators, all but one from the West, and from

both sides of the Ohio—Illinois, Kentucky, Tennessee, Mississippi; the Northwest and Southwest as usual acting together.

The vote on the protective tariff law of 1828 furnished another illustration of the solidarity of the West. New England had abandoned her free-trade position since 1824, and the North went strongly for the new tariff; the Southern seacoast States, except Louisiana, opposed it bitterly; and the bill was carried by the support of the Western States, both the free and the slave. This tariff bill was the first of the immediate irritating causes which induced South Carolina to go into the nullification movement. Benton's attitude on the measure was that of a good many other men who, in their public capacities, are obliged to appear as protectionists, but who lack his frankness in stating their reasons. He utterly disbelieved in and was opposed to the principle of the bill, but as it had bid for and secured the interest of Missouri by a heavy duty on lead, he felt himself forced to support it; and so he announced his position. He simply went with his State, precisely as did Webster, the latter, in following Massachusetts' change of front and supporting the tariff of 1828, turning a full and complete somersault. Neither the one nor the other was to blame. Free-traders are apt to look at the tariff from a sentimental standpoint; but it is in reality purely a business matter, and should be decided solely on grounds of expediency. Political economists have pretty generally agreed that protection is vicious in theory and harmful in practice; but if the majority of the people in interest wish it, and it affects only themselves, there is no earthly reason why they should not be allowed to try the experiment to their hearts' content. The trouble is that it rarely does affect only them-

selves; and in 1828 the evil was peculiarly aggravated on account of the unequal way in which the proposed law would affect different sections. It purported to benefit the rest of the country, but it undoubtedly worked real injury to the planter States, and there is small ground for wonder that the irritation over it in the region so affected should have been intense.

During Adams's term Benton began his fight for disposing of the public lands to actual settlers at a small cost. It was a move of enormous importance to the whole West; and Benton's long and sturdy contest for it, and for the right of pre-emption, entitle him to the greatest credit. He never gave up the struggle, although repulsed again and again, and at the best only partially successful; for he had to encounter much opposition, especially from the short-sighted selfishness of many of the northeasterners, who wished to consider the public lands purely as sources of revenue. He utterly opposed the then existing system of selling land to the highest bidder—a most hurtful practice; and objected to the establishment of an arbitrary minimum price, which practically kept all land below a certain value out of the market altogether. He succeeded in establishing the pre-emption system, and had the system of renting public mines, etc., abolished; and he struggled for the principle of giving land outright to settlers in certain cases. As a whole, his theory of a liberal system of land distribution was undoubtedly the correct one, and he deserves the greatest credit for having pushed it as he did.

CHAPTER IV

THE ELECTION OF JACKSON, AND THE SPOILS SYSTEM

In the presidential election of 1828 Jackson and Adams were pitted against each other as the only candidates before the people, and Jackson won an overwhelming victory. The followers of the two were fast developing respectively into Democrats and Whigs, and the parties were hardening and taking shape, while the dividing lines were being drawn more clearly and distinctly. But the contest was largely a personal one, and Jackson's success was due to his own immense popularity more than to any party principles which he was supposed to represent. Almost the entire strength of Adams was in the Northeast; but it is absolutely wrong to assume, because of this fact, that the election even remotely foreshadowed the way in which party lines would be drawn in the coming sectional antagonism over slavery. Adams led Jackson in the two slave States of Maryland and Delaware; and in the free States outside of New England Jackson had an even greater lead over Adams. East of the Alleghanies it may here and there have been taken as in some sort a triumph of the South over the North; but its sectional significance, as far as it had any, really came from its being a victory of the West over the East. Infinitely more important than this was the fact that it represented the overwhelmingly successful upheaval of the most extreme Democratic elements in the community.

Until 1828 all the Presidents, and indeed almost all

the men who took the lead in public life, alike in national and in State affairs, had been drawn from what in Europe would have been called the "upper classes." They were mainly college-bred men of high social standing, as well educated as any in the community, usually rich or at least well-to-do. Their subordinates in office were of much the same material. It was believed, and the belief was acted upon, that public life needed an apprenticeship of training and experience. Many of our public men had been able; almost all had been honorable and upright. The change of parties in 1800, when the Jeffersonian Democracy came in, altered the policy of the government, but not the character of the officials. In that movement, though Jefferson had behind him the mass of the people as the rank and file of his party, yet all his captains were still drawn from among the men in the same social position as himself. The Revolutionary War had been fought under the leadership of the colonial gentry; and for years after it was over the people, as a whole, felt that their interests could be safely intrusted to and were identical with those of the descendants of their revolutionary leaders. The classes in which were to be found almost all the learning, the talent, the business activity, and the inherited wealth and refinement of the country, had also hitherto contributed much to the body of its rulers.

The Jacksonian Democracy stood for the revolt against these rulers; its leaders, as well as their followers, all came from the mass of the people. The majority of the voters supported Jackson because they felt he was one of themselves, and because they understood that his election would mean the complete overthrow of the classes in power and their retirement from the control of the government. There was nothing to be

said against the rulers of the day; they had served the country and all its citizens well, and they were dismissed, not because the voters could truthfully allege any wrong-doing whatsoever against them, but solely because, in their purely private and personal feelings and habits of life, they were supposed to differ from the mass of the people. This was such an outrageously absurd feeling that the very men who were actuated by it, or who, like Benton, shaped and guided it, were ashamed to confess the true reason of their actions, and tried to cloak it behind an outcry, as vague and senseless as it was clamorous, against "aristocratic corruption" and other shadowy and spectral evils. Benton even talked loosely of "retrieving the country from the deplorable condition in which the enlightened classes had sunk it," although the country was perfectly prosperous and in its usual state of quiet, healthy growth. On the other hand, the opponents of Jackson indulged in talk almost as wild, and fears even more extravagant than his supporters' hopes; and the root of much of their opposition lay in a concealed but still existent caste antagonism to a man of Jackson's birth and bringing up. In fact, neither side, in spite of all their loud talk of American Republicanism, had yet mastered enough of its true spirit to be able to see that so long as public officers did their whole duty to all classes alike, it was not in the least the affair of their constituents whether they chose to spend their hours of social relaxation in their shirt-sleeves or in dress coats.

The change was a great one; it was not a change of the policy under which the government was managed, as in Jefferson's triumph, but of the men who controlled it. The two great Democratic victories had little in common; almost as little as had the two great leaders

under whose auspices they were respectively won—and few men were ever more unlike than the scholarly, timid, and shifty doctrinaire, who supplanted the elder Adams, and the ignorant, headstrong, and straightforward soldier, who was victor over the younger. That the change was the deliberate choice of the great mass of the people, and that it was one for the worse, was then, and has been ever since, the opinion of most thinking men; certainly the public service then took its first and greatest step in that downward career of progressive debasement and deterioration which has only been checked in our own days. But those who would, offhand, decry the Democratic principle on this account would do well to look at the nearly contemporaneous career of the pet heroes of a transatlantic aristocracy before passing judgment. A very charming English historian of our day* has compared Wellington with Washington; it would have been far juster to have compared him with Andrew Jackson. Both were men of strong, narrow minds and bitter prejudices, with few statesmanlike qualities, who, for brilliant military services, were raised to the highest civil positions in the gift of the State. The feeling among the aristocratic classes of Great Britain in favor of the Iron Duke was nearly as strong and quite as unreasonable as was the homage paid by their homelier kinsfolk across the Atlantic to Old Hickory. Wellington's military successes were far greater, for he had more chances; but no single feat of his surpassed the remarkable victory won against his ablest lieutenant and choicest troops by a much smaller number of backwoods riflemen under Andrew Jackson. As a statesman Wellington may have done less harm than Jackson, for he had less influence; but he has no such

* Justin McCarthy.

great mark to his credit as the old Tennesseean's attitude toward the Nullifiers. If Jackson's election is a proof that the majority is not always right, Wellington's elevation may be taken as showing that the minority, or a fraction thereof, is in its turn quite as likely to be wrong.

This caste antagonism was the distinguishing feature in the election of 1828, and the partially sectional character of the contest was due to the different degree of development the caste spirit had reached in different portions of the Union. In New England wealth was quite evenly distributed, and education and intelligence were nearly universal; so there the antagonism was slight, the bulk of the New England vote being given, as usually before and since, in favor of the right candidate. In the Middle States, on the contrary, the antagonism was very strong. In the South it was of but little political account as between the whites themselves, they all being knit together by the barbarous bond of a common lordship of race; and here the feeling for Jackson was largely derived from the close kinship still felt for the West. In the West itself, where Jackson's great strength lay, the people were still too much on the same plane of thought as well as of material prosperity, and the wealthy and cultivated classes were of too limited extent to admit of much caste feeling against the latter; and, accordingly, instead of hostility to them, the Western caste spirit took the form of hostility to their far more numerous representatives who had hitherto formed the bulk of the political rulers of the East.

New England was not only the most advanced portion of the Union, as regards intelligence, culture, and general prosperity, but was also most disagreeably

aware of the fact, and was possessed with a self-conscious virtue that was peculiarly irritating to the Westerners, who knew that they were looked down upon, and savagely resented it on every occasion; and, besides, New England was apt to meddle in affairs that more nearly concerned other localities. Several of Benton's speeches, at this time, show this irritation against the Northeast, and also incidentally bring out the solidarity of interest felt throughout the West. In a long and able speech, favoring the repeal of the iniquitous "salt tax," or high duty on imported salt (a great hobby of his, in which, after many efforts, he was finally successful), he brought out the latter point very strongly, besides complaining of the disproportionate lightness of the burden imposed upon the Northeast by the high tariff, of which he announced himself to be but a moderate adherent. In common with all other Western statesmen, he resented keenly the suspicion with which the Northeast was then only too apt to regard the West, quoting in one of his speeches with angry resentment a prevalent New England sneer at "the savages beyond the Alleghanies." At the time we are speaking of it must be remembered that many even of the most advanced Easterners were utterly incapable of appreciating the almost limitless capacity of their country for growth and expansion, being in this respect far behind their Western brethren; indeed, many regarded the acquisition of any new territory in the West with alarm and regret, as tending to make the Union of such unwieldy size that it would break of its own weight.

Benton was the leading opponent of a proposal, introduced by Senator Foot, of Connecticut, to inquire into the expediency of limiting the sales of public lands to such lands as were then in the market. The limitation

would have been most injurious to the entire West, which was thus menaced by the action of a New Englander, while Benton appeared as the champion of the whole section, North and South alike, in the speech wherein he strenuously and successfully opposed the adoption of the resolution, and at the same time bitterly attacked the quarter of the country from which it came, as having from the earliest years opposed everything that might advance the interests of the people beyond the Alleghanies. Webster came to the assistance of the mover of the measure in a speech wherein, among other things, he claimed for the North the merit of the passage of the Ordinance of 1787, in relation to the Northwest Territory, and especially of the antislavery clause therein contained. But Benton here caught him tripping, and in a very good speech showed that he was completely mistaken in his facts. The debate now, however, completely left the point at issue, taking a bitterly sectional turn, and giving rise to the famous controversy between Hayne, of South Carolina, who for the first time on the floor of the Senate announced the doctrine of nullification, and Webster, who, in response to his antagonist, voiced the feeling of the Union men of the North in that wonderful and magnificent speech known ever since under the name of the "Reply to Hayne," and the calling forth of which will henceforward be Hayne's sole title to fame. Benton, though himself a strong Union and antinullification man, was still too excited over the subject-matter of the bill and the original discussion over it to understand that the debate had ranged off upon matters of infinitely greater importance, and entirely failed to realize that he had listened to the greatest piece of oratory of the century. On the contrary, encouraged by his success earlier in

the debate, he actually attempted a kind of reply to Webster, attacking him with invective and sarcasm as an alarmist, and taunting him with the memory of the Hartford Convention, which had been held by members of the Federalist party, to which Webster himself had once belonged. Benton afterward became convinced that Webster's views were by no means those of a mere alarmist, and frankly stated that he had been wrong in his position; but at the time, heated by his original grievance, as a Western man, against New England, he failed entirely to understand the true drift of Hayne's speech. Much of New England's policy to the West was certainly excessively narrow-minded.

Jackson's administration derives a most unenviable notoriety as being the one under which the "spoils system" became, for the first time, grafted on the civil service of the nation; appointments and removals in the public service being made dependent upon political qualifications, and not, as hitherto, upon merit or capacity. Benton, to his honor, always stoutly opposed this system. It is unfair to assert that Jackson was the originator of this method of appointment; but he was certainly its foster-father, and more than any one else is responsible for its introduction into the affairs of the national government. Despite all the Eastern sneers at the "savages" of the West, it was from Eastern men that this most effective method of debauching political life came. The Jacksonian Democrats of the West, when they introduced it into the working of the federal government, simply copied the system which they found already firmly established by their Eastern allies in New York and Pennsylvania. For many years the course of politics throughout the country had been preparing and foreshadowing the advent of the "spoils

system." The greatest single stroke in its favor had been done at the instigation of Crawford, when that scheming politician was seeking the presidency, and, to further his ends, he procured the passage by Congress of a law limiting the term of service of all public officials to four years, thus turning out of office all the fifty thousand public servants during each presidential term. This law has never been repealed, every low politician being vitally interested in keeping it as it is, and accordingly it is to be found on the statute-books at the present day; and though it has the company of some other very bad measures, it still remains very much the worst of all, as regards both the evil it has done and that which it is still doing. This four years' limitation law was passed without comment or protest, every one voting in its favor, its probable working not being comprehended in the least. Says Benton, who, with all his colleagues, voted for it: "The object of the law was to pass the disbursing officers every four years under the supervision of the appointing power, for the inspection of their accounts, in order that defaulters might be detected and dropped, while the faithful should be ascertained and continued. . . . It was found to operate contrary to its intent, and to have become the facile means of getting rid of faithful disbursing officers, instead of retaining them." New York has always had a low political standard, one or the other of its great party and factional organizations, and often both or all of them, being at all times most unlovely bodies of excessively unwholesome moral tone. Aaron Burr introduced the "spoils system" into her State affairs, and his methods were followed and improved upon by Marcy, Wright, Van Buren, and all the "Albany Regency." In 1829 these men found

themselves an important constituent portion of the winning party, and immediately, by the help of the only too willing Jackson, proceeded to apply their system to affairs at Washington. It was about this time that, in the course of a debate in the Senate, Marcy gave utterance to the now notorious maxim, "To the victors belong the spoils."

Under Adams the non-partisan character of the public service had been guarded with a scrupulous care that could almost be called exaggerated. Indeed, Adams certainly went altogether too far in his non-partisanship when it came to appointing Cabinet and other high officers, his views on such points being not only fantastic, but absolutely wrong. The colorless character of his administration was largely due to his having, in his anxiety to avoid blind and unreasoning adherence to party, committed the only less serious fault of paying too little heed to party; for a healthy party spirit is prerequisite to the performance of effective work in American political life. Adams was not elected purely for himself, but also on account of the men and the principles that he was supposed to represent; and when he partly surrounded himself with men of opposite principles, he just so far, though from the best of motives, betrayed his supporters, and rightly forfeited much of their confidence. But, under him, every public servant felt that, so long as he faithfully served the State, his position was secure, no matter what his political opinions might be.

With the incoming of the Jacksonians all this changed, and terribly for the worse. A perfect reign of terror ensued among the office-holders. In the first month of the new administration more removals took place than during all the previous administrations put

together. Appointments were made with little or no attention to fitness, or even honesty, but solely because of personal or political services. Removals were not made in accordance with any known rule at all; the most frivolous pretexts were sufficient, if advanced by useful politicians who needed places already held by capable incumbents. Spying and talebearing became prominent features of official life, the meaner office-holders trying to save their own heads by denouncing others. The very best men were unceremoniously and causelessly dismissed; gray-headed clerks, who had been appointed by the earlier Presidents—by Washington, the elder Adams, and Jefferson—being turned off at an hour's notice, although a quarter of a century's faithful work in the public service had unfitted them to earn their living elsewhere. Indeed, it was upon the best and most efficient men that the blow fell heaviest; the spies, talebearers, and tricksters often retained their positions. In 1829 the public service was, as it always had been, administered purely in the interest of the people; and the man who was styled the especial champion of the people dealt that service the heaviest blow it has ever received.

Benton himself always took a sound stand on the civil service question, although his partisanship led him at times to defend Jackson's course when he must have known well that it was indefensible. He viewed with the greatest alarm and hostility the growth of the "spoils system," and early introduced, as chairman of a special committee, a bill to repeal the harmful four years' limitation act. In discussing this proposed bill afterward, he wrote, in words that apply as much at this time as they did then: "The expiration of the four years' term came to be considered as the termination

and vacation of all the offices on which it fell, and the creation of vacancies to be filled at the option of the president. The bill to remedy this defect gave legal effect to the original intention of the law by confining the vacation of office to actual defaulters. The power of the president to dismiss civil officers was not attempted to be curtailed, but the restraints of responsibility were placed upon its exercise by requiring the cause of dismission to be communicated to Congress in each case. The section of the bill to that effect was in these words: *That in all nominations made by the president to the Senate, to fill vacancies occasioned by an exercise of the president's power to remove from office, the fact of the removal shall be stated to the Senate at the same time that the nomination is made, with a statement of the reasons for which such officer may have been removed.* This was intended to operate as a restraint upon removals without cause."

In the "Thirty Years' View" he again writes, in language which would be appropriate from every advanced civil service reformer of the present day, that is, from every disinterested man who has studied the workings of the "spoils system" with any intelligence:

"I consider 'sweeping' removals, as now practised by both parties, a great political evil in our country, injurious to individuals, to the public service, to the purity of elections, and to the harmony and union of the people. Certainly no individual has a right to an office; no one has an estate or property in a public employment; but when a mere ministerial worker in a subordinate station has learned its duties by experience and approved his fidelity by his conduct, it is an injury to the public service to exchange him for a novice whose only title to the place may be a political badge or parti-

san service. It is exchanging experience for inexperience, tried ability for untried, and destroying the incentive to good conduct by destroying its reward. To the party displaced it is an injury, he having become a proficient in that business, expecting to remain in it during good behavior, and finding it difficult, at an advanced age, and with fixed habits, to begin a new career in some new walk of life. It converts elections into scrambles for office, and degrades the government into an office for rewards and punishments; and divides the people of the Union into two adverse parties, each in its turn, and as it becomes dominant, to strip and proscribe the other."

Benton had now taken the position which he was for many years to hold, as the recognized senatorial leader of a great and well-defined party. Until 1828 the prominent political chiefs of the nation had either been its Presidents, or had been in the Cabinets of these Presidents. But after Jackson's time they were in the Senate, and it was on this body that public attention was concentrated. Jackson's Cabinet itself showed such a falling off, when compared with the Cabinets of any of his predecessors, as to justify the caustic criticism that, when he took office, there came in "the millennium of the minnows." In the Senate, on the contrary, there were never before or since so many men of commanding intellect and powers. Calhoun had been elected as Vice-President on the Jacksonian ticket, and was thus, in 1829, presiding over the body of which he soon became an active member; Webster and Clay were already taking their positions as the leaders of the great National Republican, or, as it was afterward called, Whig party.

When the rupture between Calhoun and the Jacksonian Democrats, and the resignation of the former

from the vice-presidency took place, three parties developed in the United States Senate. One was composed of the Jacksonian Democrats, with Benton at their head; one was made up of the little band of Nullifiers, led by Calhoun; and the third included the rather loose array of the Whigs, under Clay and Webster. The feeling of the Jacksonians toward Calhoun and the Nullifiers and toward Clay and the Clay Whigs were largely those of personal animosity; but they had very little of this sentiment toward Webster and his associates, their differences with them being on questions of party principle, or else proceeding from merely sectional causes.

CHAPTER V

THE STRUGGLE WITH THE NULLIFIERS

During both Jackson's presidential terms he and his adherents were engaged in two great struggles; that with the Nullifiers, and that with the Bank. Although these struggles were in part synchronous, it will be easier to discuss each by itself.

The nullification movement in South Carolina, during the latter part of the third and early part of the fourth decades in the present century, had nothing to do, except in the most distant way, with slavery. Its immediate cause was the high tariff; remotely it sprang from the same feelings which produced the Virginia and Kentucky resolutions of 1798.

Certain of the slave States, including those which raised hemp, indigo, and sugar, were high-tariff States; indeed, it was not till toward the close of the presidency of Monroe that there had been much sectional feeling over the policy of protection. Originally, while we were a purely agricultural and mercantile people, free trade was the only economic policy which occurred to us as possible to be followed, the first tariff bill being passed in 1816. South Carolina then was inclined to favor the system, Calhoun himself supporting the bill, and, his subsequent denials to the contrary notwithstanding, distinctly advocating the policy of protection to native industries; while Massachusetts then and afterward stoutly opposed its introduction, as hostile to her interests. However, the bill was passed, and Massachusetts had to submit to its operation. After 1816 new

tariff laws were enacted about every four years, and soon the coast slave States, except Louisiana, realized that their working was hurtful to the interests of the planters. New England also changed her attitude; and when the protective tariff bill of 1828 came up, its opponents and supporters were sharply divided by sectional lines. But these lines were not such as would have divided the States on the question of slavery. The Northeast and Northwest alike favored the measure, as also did all the Southern States west of the Alleghanies and Louisiana. It was therefore passed by an overwhelming vote, against the solid opposition of the belt of Southern coast States stretching from Virginia to Mississippi, and including these two.

The States that felt themselves harmed by the tariff did something more than record their disapproval by the votes of their representatives in Congress. They nearly all, through their legislatures, entered emphatic protests against its adoption, as being most harmful to them and dangerous to the Union; and some accompanied their protests with threats as to what would be done if the obnoxious laws should be enforced. They certainly had grounds for discontent. In 1828 the tariff, whether it benefited the country as a whole or not, unquestionably harmed the South; and in a federal Union it is most unwise to pass laws which shall benefit one part of the community to the hurt of another part, when the latter receives no compensation. The truculent and unyielding attitude of the extreme protectionists was irritating in the extreme; for cooler men than the South Carolinians might well have been exasperated at such an utterance as that of Henry Clay, when he stated that for the sake of the "American system"—by which title he was fond of styling a doctrine already ancient

in mediæval times—he would "defy the South, the president and the devil."

On the other hand, both the good and the evil effects of the tariff were greatly exaggerated. Some harm to the planter States was doubtless caused by it; but their falling back, as compared with the North, in the race for prosperity, was doubtless caused much more by the presence of slavery, as Dallas, of Pennsylvania, pointed out in the course of some very temperate and moderate remarks in the Senate. Clay's assertions as to what the tariff had done for the West were equally ill founded, as Benton showed in a good speech, wherein he described picturesquely enough the industries and general condition of his portion of the country, and asserted with truth that its revived prosperity was due to its own resources, entirely independent of federal aid or legislation. He said: "I do not think we are indebted to the high tariff for our fertile lands and our navigable rivers; and I am certain we are indebted to these blessings for the prosperity we enjoy." "In all that comes from the soil the people of the West are rich. They have an abundant supply of food for man and beast, and a large surplus to send abroad. They have the comfortable living which industry creates for itself in a rich soil, but beyond this they are poor. . . . They have no roads paved or macadamized; no canals or aqueducts; no bridges of stone across the innumerable streams; no edifices dedicated to eternity; no schools for the fine arts; not a public library for which an ordinary scholar would not apologize." Then he went on to speak of the commerce of the West and its exports, "the marching myriads of living animals annually taking their departure from the heart of the West, defiling through the gorges of the Cumberland, the Alleghany,

and the Appalachian mountains, or traversing the plains of the South, diverging as they march, . . . and the flying steamboats and the fleets of floating arks, loaded with the products of the forest, the farm, and the pasture, following the courses of our noble rivers, and bearing their freights to the great city" of New Orleans.

Unfortunately Benton would interlard even his best speeches with theories of economics often more or less crude, and, still worse, with a series of classic quotations and allusions; for he was grievously afflicted with the rage for cheap pseudoclassicism that Jefferson and his school had borrowed from the French revolutionists. Nor could he resist the temptation to drag in allusions to some favorite hobby. The repeal of the salt tax was an especial favorite of his. He was perfectly right in attacking the tax, and deserves the greatest credit for the persistency which finally won him the victory. But his associates, unless of a humorous turn of mind, must have found his allusions to it rather tiresome, as when, apropos of the commerce of the Mississippi, and without any possible excuse for speaking of the iniquity of taxing salt, he suddenly alluded to New Orleans as "that great city which revives upon the banks of the Mississippi the name of the greatest of the emperors* that ever reigned upon the banks of the Tiber, and who eclipsed the glory of his own heroic exploits by giving an order to his legions never to levy a contribution of salt upon a Roman citizen!"

It must be admitted that the tariff did some harm to the South, and that it was natural for the latter to feel resentment at the way in which it worked. But it must also be remembered that no law can be passed which does not distribute its benefits more or less un-

* Aurelian.

equally, and which does not, in all probability, work harm in some cases. Moreover, the South was estopped from complaining of one section being harmed by a law that benefited, or was supposed to benefit, the country at large, by her position in regard to the famous embargo and non-importation acts. These inflicted infinitely more damage and loss in New England than any tariff law could inflict on South Carolina, and, moreover, were put into execution on account of a quarrel with England forced on by the West and South contrary to the desire of the East. Yet the Southerners were fierce in their denunciations of such of the Federalists as went to the extreme in opposition to them. Even in 1816 Massachusetts had been obliged to submit with good grace to the workings of a tariff which she deemed hostile to her interests, and which many Southerners then advocated. Certainly, even if the new tariff laws were ill advised, unjust, and unequal in their working, yet they did not, in the most remote degree, justify any effort to break up the Union; especially the South had no business to complain when she herself had joined in laying heavier burdens on the shoulders of New England.

Complain she did, however; and soon added threats to complaints, and was evidently ready to add acts to threats. Georgia, at first, took the lead in denunciation; but South Carolina soon surpassed her, and finally went to the length of advocating and preparing for separation from the Union; a step that produced a revulsion of feeling even among her fellow antitariff States. The South Carolinian statesmen now proclaimed the doctrine of nullification—that is, proclaimed that if any State deemed a federal law improper, it could proceed to declare that law null and void so far as its own territory was concerned—and, as a corollary, that it had

the right forcibly to prevent execution of this void law within its borders. This was proclaimed, not as an exercise of the right of revolution, which, in the last resort, belongs, of course, to every community and class, but as a constitutional privilege. Jefferson was quoted as the father of the idea, and the Kentucky resolutions of 1798–99, which he drew, were cited as the precedent for the South Carolinian action. In both these last assertions the Nullifiers were correct. Jefferson was the father of nullification, and therefore of secession. He used the word "nullify" in the original draft which he supplied to the Kentucky legislature, and though that body struck it out of the resolutions which they passed in 1798, they inserted it in those of the following year. This was done mainly as an unscrupulous party move on Jefferson's part, and when his side came into power he became a firm upholder of the Union; and, being constitutionally unable to put a proper value on truthfulness, he even denied that his resolutions could be construed to favor nullification—though they could by no possibility be construed to mean anything else.

At this time it is not necessary to discuss nullification as a constitutional dogma; it is an absurdity too great to demand serious refutation. The United States has the same right to protect itself from death by nullification, secession, or rebellion that a man has to protect himself from death by assassination. Calhoun's hair-splitting and metaphysical disquisitions on the constitutionality of nullification have now little more practical interest than have the extraordinary arguments and discussions of the schoolmen of the Middle Ages.

But at the time they were of vital interest, for they were words which it was known South Carolina was

prepared to back up by deeds. Calhoun was Vice-President, the second officer in the federal government, and yet also the avowed leader of the most bitter disunionists. His State supported him by an overwhelming majority, although even within its own borders there was an able opposition, headed by the gallant and loyal family of the Draytons—the same family that afterward furnished the captain of Farragut's flag-ship, the glorious old *Hartford*. There was a strong sentiment in the other Southern States in his favor; the public men of South Carolina made speech after speech goading him on to take even more advanced ground.

In Washington the current at first seemed to be all setting in favor of the Nullifiers; they even counted on Jackson's support, as he was a Southerner and a States'-rights man. But he was also a strong Unionist, and, moreover, at this time, felt very bitterly toward Calhoun, with whom he had just had a split, and had in consequence remodelled his Cabinet, thrusting out all Calhoun's supporters, and adopting Van Buren as his political heir—the position which it was hitherto supposed the great Carolina separatist occupied.

The first man to take up the gantlet the Nullifiers had thrown down was Webster, in his famous reply to Hayne. He, of course, voiced the sentiment of the Whigs, and especially of the Northeast, where the high tariff was regarded with peculiar favor, where the Union feeling was strong, and where there was a certain antagonism felt toward the South. The Jacksonian Democrats, whose strength lay in the West, had not yet spoken. They were, for the most part, neither ultra-protectionists nor absolute free-traders; Jackson's early presidential utterances had given offense to the South by not condemning all high-tariff legislation, but at the

same time had declared in favor of a much more moderate degree of protection than suited the Whigs. Only a few weeks after Webster's speech Jackson's chance came, and he declared himself in unmistakable terms. It was on the occasion of the Jefferson birthday banquet, April 13, 1830. An effort was then being made to have Jefferson's birthday celebrated annually; and the Nullifiers, rightly claiming him as their first and chief apostle, attempted to turn this particular feast into a demonstration in favor of nullification. Most of the speakers present were actively or passively in favor of the movement, and the toasts proposed strongly savored of the new doctrine. But Jackson, Benton, and a number of other Union men were in attendance also, and when it came to Jackson's turn he electrified the audience by proposing: "Our federal Union; it must be preserved." Calhoun at once answered with: "The Union; next to our liberty the most dear; may we all remember that it can only be preserved by respecting the rights of the states and distributing equally the benefit and burden of the Union." The issue between the President and the Vice-President was now complete, and the Jacksonian Democracy was squarely committed against nullification. Jackson had risen to the occasion as only a strong and a great man could rise, and his few, telling words, finely contrasting at every point with Calhoun's utterances, rang throughout the whole country, and will last as long as our government. One result, at least, the Nullifiers accomplished—they completely put an end to the Jefferson birthday celebrations.

The South Carolinians had no intention of flinching from the contest which they had provoked, even when they saw that the North and West were united against

them, and though the tide began to set the same way in their sister States of the South; North Carolina, among the latter, being the first and most pronounced in her support of the President and denunciation of the Nullifiers. The men of the Palmetto State have always ranked high for hot-headed courage, and they soon showed that they had wills as fiery as that of Jackson himself. Yet in the latter they had met an antagonist well worthy of any foeman's steel. In declining an invitation to be present at Charleston, on July 4, 1831, the President again defined most clearly his position in favor of the Union, and his words had an especial significance because he let it be seen that he was fully determined to back them up by force if necessary. But his letter only had the effect of inflaming still more the minds of the South Carolinians. The prime cause of irritation, the tariff, still remained; and in 1832, Clay, having entered the Senate after a long retirement from politics, put the finishing stroke to their anger by procuring the passage of a new tariff bill, which left the planter States almost as badly off as did the law of 1828. Jackson signed this, although not believing that it went far enough in the reduction of duties.

In the presidential election of 1832, Jackson defeated Clay by an enormous majority; Van Buren was elected Vice-President, there being thus a Northern man on the ticket. South Carolina declined to take part in the election, throwing away her vote. Again, it must be kept in mind that the slave question did not shape, or, indeed, enter into this contest at all, directly, although beginning to be present in the background as a source of irritation. In 1832 there was tenfold more feeling in the North against Masonry, and secret societies generally, than there was against slavery.

Benton threw himself in, heart and soul, with the Union party, acting as Jackson's right-hand man throughout the contest with South Carolina, and showing an even more resolute and unflinching front than Old Hickory himself. No better or trustier ally than the Missouri statesman, in a hard fight for a principle, could be desired. He was intensely national in all his habits of thought; he took a deep, personal pride in all his country—North, South, East, and West. He had been very loath to believe that any movement hostile to the Union was really on foot; but once thoroughly convinced of it he chose his own line of action without an instant's hesitation.

A fortnight after the presidential election South Carolina passed her ordinance of nullification, directed against the tariff laws generally, and against those of 1828 and 1832 in particular. The ordinance was to take effect on February 1st; and if meantime the federal government should make any attempt to enforce the laws, the fact of such attempt was to end the continuance of South Carolina in the Union.

Jackson promptly issued a proclamation against nullification, composed jointly by himself and the great Louisiana jurist and statesman, Livingston. It is one of the ablest, as well as one of the most important, of all American State papers. It is hard to see how any American can read it now without feeling his veins thrill. Some claim it as being mainly the work of Jackson, others as that of Livingston; it is great honor for either to have had a hand in its production.

In his annual message the President merely referred, in passing, to the Nullifiers, expressing his opinion that the action in reducing the duties, which the extinction of the public debt would permit and require, would put

an end to the proceedings. As matters grew more threatening, however, South Carolina making every preparation for war and apparently not being conciliated in the least by the evident desire in Congress to meet her more than half-way on the tariff question, Jackson sent a special message to both houses. He had already sent General Scott to Charleston, and had begun the concentration of certain military and naval forces in or near the State boundaries. He now asked Congress to pass a measure to enable him to deal better with possible resistance to the laws. South Carolina having complained of the oppressed condition in which she found herself, owing to the working of the tariff, Jackson, in his message, with some humor, quoted in reply the last Thanksgiving proclamation of her governor, wherein he dilated upon the State's unexampled prosperity and happiness.

It must always be kept in mind in describing the attitude of the Jacksonian Democrats toward the Nullifiers that they were all along, especially in the West, hostile to a very high tariff. Jackson and Benton had always favored a much lower tariff than that established in 1828 and hardly changed in 1832. It was no change of front on their part now to advocate a reduction of duties. Jackson and Benton both felt that there was much ground for South Carolina's original complaint, although as strongly opposed to her nullification attitude as any Northerner. Most of the Southern senators and representatives, though opposed to nullification, were almost equally hostile to the high tariff; and very many others were at heart in sympathy with nullification itself. The intensely national and antiseparatist tone of Jackson's declaration—a document that might well have come from Washington or Lincoln, and

that would have reflected high honor on either—though warmly approved by Benton, was very repugnant to many of the Southern Democrats, and was too much even for certain of the Whigs. In fact, it reads like the utterance of some great Federalist or Republican leader. The feeling in Congress, as a whole, was as strong against the tariff as it was against nullification; and Jackson had to take this into account, all the more because not only was he in some degree of the same way of thinking, but also many of his followers entertained the sentiment even more earnestly.

Calhoun introduced a series of nullification resolutions into the Senate, and defended them strongly in the prolonged constitutional debate that followed. South Carolina meanwhile put off the date at which her decrees were to take effect, so that she might see what Congress would do. Beyond question, Jackson's firmness, and the way in which he was backed up by Benton, Webster, and their followers, was having some effect. He had openly avowed his intention, if matters went too far, of hanging Calhoun "higher than Haman." He unquestionably meant to imprison him, as well as the other South Carolina leaders, the instant that State came into actual collision with the Union; and to the end of his life regretted, and with reason, that he had not done so without waiting for an overt act of resistance. Some historians have treated this as if it were an idle threat; but such it certainly was not. Jackson undoubtedly fully meant what he said, and would have acted promptly had the provocation occurred, and, moreover, he would have been sustained by the country. He was not the man to weigh minutely what would and what would not fall just on one side or the other of the line defining treason; nor was it the time for too

scrupulous adherence to precise wording. Had a collision occurred, neither Calhoun nor his colleague would ever have been permitted to leave Washington; and brave though they were, the fact unquestionably had much influence with them.

Webster was now acting heartily with Benton. He introduced a set of resolutions which showed that in the matters both of the tariff and of nullification his position was much the same as was that of the Missourian. Unfortunately Congress, as a whole, was by no means so stiff-kneed. A certain number of Whigs followed Webster, and a certain number of Democrats clung to Benton; but most Southerners were very reluctant to allow pressure to be brought to bear on South Carolina, and many Northerners were as willing to compromise as Henry Clay himself. In accordance with Jackson's recommendations two bills were introduced: one the so-called "Force bill," to allow the President to take steps to defend the federal authority in the event of actual collision; and the other a moderate, and, on the whole, proper tariff bill, to reduce protective duties. Both were introduced by administration supporters. Benton and Webster warmly sustained the "Force bill," which was bitterly attacked by the Nullifiers and by most of the Southerners, who really hardly knew what stand to take, the leading opponent being Tyler, of Virginia, whose disunion attitude was almost as clearly marked as that of Calhoun himself. The measure was eminently just, and was precisely what the crisis demanded; and the Senate finally passed it and sent it to the House.

All this time an obstinate struggle was going on over the tariff bill. Calhoun and his sympathizers were beginning to see that there was real danger ahead, alike

to themselves, their constituents, and their principles, if they followed unswervingly the course they had laid down; and the weak-kneed brethren on the other side, headed by Clay, were becoming even more uneasy. Calhoun wished to avert collision with the federal government; Clay was quite as anxious to avoid an outbreak in the South and to save what he could of the protective system, which was evidently doomed. Calhoun was willing to sacrifice some of his constitutional theories in regard to protection; Clay was ready greatly to reduce protection itself. Each of them, but especially Clay, was prepared to shift his stand somewhat from that of abstract moral right to that of expediency. Benton and Webster were too resolute and determined in their hostility to any form of yielding to South Carolina's insolent defiance to admit any hope of getting them to accept a compromise; but the majority of the members were known to be only too ready to jump at any half-way measure which would patch up the affair for the present, no matter what the sacrifice of principle or how great the risk incurred for the future. Accordingly, Clay and Calhoun met and agreed on a curious bill, in reality recognizing the protective system, but making a great although gradual reduction of duties; and Clay introduced this as a "compromise measure." It was substituted in the House for the administration tariff bill, was passed and sent to the Senate. It gave South Carolina much, but not all, that she demanded. Her representatives announced themselves satisfied, and supported it, together with all their Southern sympathizers. Webster and Benton fought it stoutly to the last, but it was passed by a great majority; a few Northerners followed Webster, and Benton received fair support from his Missouri colleagues and the Mary-

land senators; the other senators, Whigs and Democrats alike, voted for the measure. Many of the Southerners were imbued with separatist principles, although not yet to the extent that Calhoun was; others, though Union men, did not possess the unflinching will and stern strength of character that enabled Benton to stand out against any section of the country, even his own, if it was wrong. Silas Wright, of New York, a typical Northern "dough-face" politician, gave exact expression to the "dough-face" sentiment, which induced Northern members to vote for the compromise, when he stated that he was unalterably opposed to the principle of the bill, but that on account of the attitude of South Carolina, and of the extreme desire which he had to remove all cause of discontent in that State, and in order to enable her again to become an affectionate member of the Union, he would vote for what was satisfactory to her, although repugnant to himself. Wright, Marcy, and their successors in New York politics, almost up to the present day, certainly carried cringing subserviency to the South to a pitch that was fairly sublime.

The "Force bill" and the compromise tariff bill passed both houses nearly simultaneously, and were sent up to the President, who signed both on the same day. His signing the compromise bill was a piece of weakness out of keeping with his whole character, and especially out of keeping with his previous course toward the Nullifiers. The position assumed by Benton and Webster, that South Carolina should be made to submit first and should have the justice of her claims examined into afterward, was unquestionably the only proper attitude.

Benton wrote:

"My objections to this bill, and to its mode of being

passed, were deep and abiding, and went far beyond its own obnoxious provisions, and all the transient and temporary considerations connected with it. . . . A compromise made with a state in arms is a capitulation to that state. . . . The injury was great then, and a permanent evil example. It remitted the government to the condition of the old confederation, acting upon sovereignties instead of individuals. It violated the feature of our Union which discriminated it from all confederacies that ever existed, and which was wisely and patriotically put into the Constitution to save it from the fate which had attended all confederacies, ancient and modern. . . . The framers of our Constitution established a Union instead of a League—to be sovereign and independent within its sphere, acting upon persons through its own laws and courts, instead of acting on communities through persuasion or force. The effect of this compromise legislation was to destroy this great feature of our Union—to bring the general and state governments into conflict—and to substitute a sovereign state for an offending individual as often as a state chose to make the cause of that individual her own."

Not only was Benton's interpretation of the Constitution sound, and one that by the course of events has now come to be universally accepted, but his criticisms on the wisdom of the compromise bill were perfectly just. Had the anti-Nullifiers stood firm, the Nullifiers would probably have given way, and if not, would certainly have been crushed. Against a solid North and West, with a divided South, even her own people not being unanimous, and with Jackson as chief executive, South Carolina could not have made even a respectable resistance. A salutary lesson then might

very possibly have saved infinite trouble and bloodshed thereafter. But in Jackson's case it must be remembered that, so far as his acts depended purely upon his own will and judgment, no fault can be found with him; he erred only in ratifying a compromise agreed to by the vast majority of the representatives of the people in both houses of Congress.

The battle did not result in a decisive victory for either side. This was shown by the very fact that each party insisted that it had won a signal triumph. Calhoun and Clay afterward quarrelled in the Senate-chamber as to which had given up the more in the compromise. South Carolina had declared, first, that the tariff was unconstitutional, and therefore to be opposed upon principle; second, that it worked injustice to her interests, and must be abolished forthwith; thirdly, that, if it were not so abolished, she would assert her power to nullify a federal law, and, if necessary, would secede from the Union. When her representatives agreed to the compromise bill, they abandoned the first point; the second was decided largely in her favor, though protection was not by any means entirely given up; the third she was allowed to insist upon with impunity, although the other side, by passing the "Force bill," showed that in case matters did proceed to extremities they were prepared to act upon the opposite conviction. Still, she gained most of that for which she contended, and the victory, as a whole, rested with her. Calhoun's purposes seem to have been, in the main, pure; but few criminals have worked as much harm to their country as he did. The plea of good intentions is not one that can be allowed to have much weight in passing historical judgment upon a man whose wrong-headedness and distorted way of looking at things produced, or helped to

produce, such incalculable evil; there is a wide political applicability in the remark attributed to a famous Texan, to the effect that he might, in the end, pardon a man who shot him on purpose, but that he would surely never forgive one who did so accidentally.

Without doubt, the honors of the nullification dispute were borne off by Benton and Webster. The latter's reply to Hayne is, perhaps, the greatest single speech of the nineteenth century, and he deserves the highest credit for the stubbornness with which he stood by his colors to the last. There never was any question of Webster's courage; on the occasions when he changed front he was actuated by self-interest and ambition, not by timidity. Usually he appears as an advocate rather than an earnest believer in the cause he represents; but when it came to be a question of the Union, he felt what he said with the whole strength of his nature.

An even greater meed of praise attaches to Benton for the unswerving fidelity which he showed to the Union in this crisis. Webster was a high-tariff man, and was backed up by all the sectional antipathies of the Northeast in his opposition to the Nullifiers; Benton, on the contrary, was a believer in a low tariff, or in one for revenue merely, and his sectional antipathies were the other way. Yet, even when deserted by his chief, and when he was opposed to every senator from south of the Potomac and the Ohio, he did not flinch for a moment from his attitude of aggressive loyalty to the national Union. He had a singularly strong and upright character; this country has never had a statesman more fearlessly true to his convictions, when great questions were at stake, no matter what might be the cost to himself, or the pressure from outside—even when, as happened later, his own State was against him.

Intellectually he cannot for a moment be compared to the great Massachusetts senator; but morally he towers much higher.

Yet, while praising Jackson and Benton for their behavior toward South Carolina, we cannot forget that but a couple of years previously they had not raised their voices even in the mildest rebuke of Georgia for conduct which, though not nearly so bad in degree as that of South Carolina, was of much the same kind. Toward the close of Adams's term, Georgia had bid defiance to the mandates of the Supreme Court, and proceeded to settle the Indian question within her borders without regard to the authority of the United States, and these matters were still unsettled when Jackson became President. Unfortunately he let his personal feelings bias him; and, as he took the Western and Georgian view of the Indian question, and, moreover, hated the Supreme Court because it was largely Federalist in its composition, he declined to interfere. David Crockett, himself a Union man and a nationalist to the backbone, rated Jackson savagely, and with justice, for the inconsistency of his conduct in the two cases, accusing him of having, by his harmful leniency to Georgia, encouraged South Carolina to act as she did, and ridiculing him because, while he smiled at the deeds of the one State, when the like acts were done by the other, "he took up the rod of correction and shook it over her."

CHAPTER VI

JACKSON AND BENTON MAKE WAR ON THE BANK

If the struggle with the Nullifiers showed Benton at his best, in the conflict with the Bank he exhibited certain qualities which hardly place him in so favorable a light. Jackson's attack upon the Bank was a move undertaken mainly on his own responsibility, and one which, at first, most of his prominent friends were alarmed to see him undertake. Benton alone supported him from the beginning. Captain and lieutenant alike intensely appreciated the joy of battle; they cared for a fight because it was a fight, and the certainty of a struggle, such as would have daunted weaker or more timid men, simply offered to them an additional inducement to follow out the course they had planned. Benton's thoroughgoing support was invaluable to Jackson. The President sorely needed a friend in the Senate who would uphold him through thick and thin, and who yet commanded the respect of all his opponents by his strength, ability, and courage. To be sure, Benton's knowledge of financial economics was not always profound; but, on the other hand, a thorough mastery of the laws of finance would have been, in this fight, a very serious disadvantage to any champion of Jackson.

The rights and wrongs of this matter have been worn threadbare in countless discussions. For much of the hostility of Jackson and Benton toward the Bank, there were excellent grounds; but many of their actions were wholly indefensible and very harmful in their results to the country. An assault upon what Benton called "the

money power" is apt to be popular in a Democratic republic, partly on account of the vague fear with which the poorer and more ignorant voters regard a powerful institution, whose working they do not understand, and partly on account of the jealousy they feel toward those who are better off than themselves. When these feelings are appealed to by men who are intensely in earnest, and who are themselves convinced of the justice and wisdom of their course, they become very formidable factors in any political contest.

The struggle first became important when the question of the recharter of the Bank was raised toward the end of Jackson's first term, the present charter still having three years to run. This charter had in it many grave faults; and there might well be a question as to whether it should be renewed. The Bank itself, beyond doubt, possessed enormous power; too much power for its own or outsiders' good. Its president, Biddle, was a man of some ability, but conceited to the last degree, untruthful, and to a certain extent unscrupulous in the use he made of the political influence of the great moneyed institution over which he presided. Some of the financial theories on which he managed the Bank were wrong; yet, on the whole, it was well conducted, and under its care the monetary condition of the country was quiet and good, infinitely better than it had been before, or than, under the auspices of the Jacksonian Democracy, it afterward became.

The two great reasons for Jackson's success throughout his political career were to be found in the strength of the feeling in his favor among the poorer and least educated classes of voters, and in the ardent support given him by the low politicians, who, by playing on his prejudices and passions, moulded him to their wishes,

and who organized and perfected in their own and his interests a great political machine, founded on the "spoils system"; and both the Jacksonian rank and file and the Jacksonian politicians soon agreed heartily in their opposition to the Bank. Jackson and Benton opposed it for the same reasons that the bulk of their followers did; that is to say, partly from honest and ignorant prejudice and partly from a well-founded feeling of distrust as to some of its actions. The mass of their fellow party leaders and henchmen assailed it with the cry that it was exerting its influence to debauch politics, while at the same time they really sought to use it as a power in politics on their own side.

Jackson, in his first annual message in 1829, had hinted that he was opposed to the recharter of the Bank, then a question of the future and not to arise for four or five years. At the same time he had called in question the constitutionality and expediency of the Bank's existence, and had criticised as vicious its currency system. The matter of constitutionality had been already decided by the Supreme Court, the proper tribunal, and was, and had been for years, an accepted fact; it was an absurdity to call it in question. As regards the matter of expediency, certainly the Jacksonians failed signally to put anything better in its place. Yet it was undeniable that there were grave defects in the currency system.

The President's message roused but little interest, and what little it did rouse was among the Bank's friends. At once these began to prepare the way for the recharter by an active and extensive agitation in its favor. The main bank was at Philadelphia, but it had branches everywhere, and naturally each branch bank was a centre of opposition to the President's pro-

posed policy. As the friends of the Bank were greatly interested, and as the matter did not immediately concern those who afterward became its foes, the former, for the time, had it all their own way, and the drift of public opinion seemed to be strongly in its favor.

Benton was almost the only public man of prominence who tried to stem this tide from the beginning. Jackson's own party associates were originally largely against him, and so he stood all the more in need of the vigorous support which he received from the Missouri senator. Indeed, it would be unfair in the matter of the attack on the Bank to call Benton Jackson's follower; he might with more propriety be called the leader in the assault, although of course he could accomplish little compared with what was done by the great popular idol. He had always been hostile to the Bank, largely as a matter of Jeffersonian tradition, and he had shown his hostility by resolutions introduced in the Senate before Jackson was elected President.

Early in 1831 he asked leave to introduce a resolution against the recharter of the Bank; his purpose being merely to give formal notice of war against it, and to attempt to stir up a current of feeling counter to that which then seemed to be generally prevailing in its favor. In his speech he carefully avoided laying stress upon any such abstract point as that of constitutionality, and dwelt instead upon the questions that would affect the popular mind; assailing the Bank "as having too much power over the people and the government, over business and politics, and as too much disposed to exercise that power to the prejudice of the freedom and equality which should prevail in a republic, to be allowed to exist in our country." The force of such an argument in a popular election will be

acknowledged by all practical politicians. But, although Benton probably believed what he said, or at any rate most of it, he certainly ought not to have opened the discussion of a great financial measure with a demagogic appeal to caste prejudices. He wished to substitute a gold currency in the place of the existing bank-notes, and was not disturbed at all as to how he would supply the place of the Bank, saying: "I am willing to see the charter expire, without providing any substitute for the present Bank. I am willing to see the currency of the federal government left to the hard money mentioned and intended in the Constitution; . . . every species of paper might be left to the state authorities, unrecognized by the federal government!" Of the beauties of such a system as the last the country later on received practical demonstration. Some of his utterances, however, could be commended to the friends of greenbacks and of dishonest money even at the present day, as when he says: "Gold and silver are the best currency for a republic; it suits the men of middle property and the working people best; and if I was going to establish a working man's party it should be on the basis of hard money—a hard-money party against a paper party." The Bank was in Philadelphia; much of the stock was held in the East, and a good deal was held abroad, which gave Benton a chance to play on sectional feelings, as follows: "To whom is all the power granted? To a company of private individuals, many of them foreigners, and the mass of them residing in a remote and narrow corner of the Union, unconnected by any sympathy with the fertile regions of the Great Valley, in which the natural power of this Union —the power of numbers—will be found to reside long before the renewed term of a second charter would ex-

pire." Among the other sentences occurs the following bit of pure demagogic pyrotechnics: "It [the Bank] tends to aggravate the inequality of fortunes; to make the rich richer and the poor poorer; to multiply nabobs and paupers; and to deepen and widen the gulf which separates Dives from Lazarus. A great moneyed power is favorable to great capitalists, for it is the principle of money to favor money. It is unfavorable to small capitalists, for it is the principle of money to eschew the needy and unfortunate. It is injurious to the laboring classes." Altogether it was not a speech to be proud of. The Senate refused permission to introduce the resolution by the close vote of twenty-three to twenty.

Benton lived only a generation after that one which had itself experienced oppression from a king, from an aristocratic legislature and from a foreign power; and so his rant about the undue influence of foreigners in our governmental affairs, and his declamation over the purely supposititious powers that were presumed to be conspiring against the welfare of the poorer classes probably more nearly expressed his real feelings than would be the case with the similar utterances of any leading statesman nowadays. He was an enthusiastic believer in the extreme Jeffersonian doctrinaire views as to the will of the majority being always right, and as to the moral perfection of the average voter. Like his fellow statesmen he failed to see the curious absurdity of supporting black slavery, and yet claiming universal suffrage for whites as a divine right, not as a mere matter of expediency resulting on the whole better than any other method. He had not learned that the majority in a democracy has no more right to tyrannize over a minority than, under a different system, the latter would have to oppress the former; and that, if

there is a moral principle at stake, the saying that the voice of the people is the voice of God may be quite as untrue, and do quite as much mischief, as the old theory of the divine right of kings. The distinguishing feature of our American governmental system is the freedom of the individual; it is quite as important to prevent his being oppressed by many men as it is to save him from the tyranny of one.

This speech on the recharter showed a great deal of wide reading and much information; but a good part of it was sheer declamation, in the turgid, pompous style that Benton, as well as a great many other American public speakers, was apt to mistake for genuine oratory. His subsequent speech on the currency, however, was much better. This was likewise delivered on the occasion of asking leave to present a joint resolution, which leave was refused. The branch-draft system was the object of the assault. These branch drafts were for even sums of small denomination, circulating like bank-notes; they were drawn on the parent bank at Philadelphia to the order of some officer of the branch bank and were indorsed by the latter to bearer. Thus paper was issued at one place which was payable at another and a distant place; and among other results there ensued a constant inflation of credit. They were very mischievous in their workings; they had none of the marks of convertible bank-notes or money, and so long as credit was active there could be no check on the inflation of the currency by them. Payment could be voluntarily made at the branch banks whence issued, but if it was refused the owner had only the right to go to Philadelphia and sue the directors there. Most of these drafts were issued at the most remote and inaccessible branches, the payment of them being, there-

fore, much delayed by distance and difficulty; nor were the directors liable for excessive issues. They constituted the bulk of all the paper seen in circulation; they were supposed to be equivalent to money, but being bills of exchange they were merely negotiable instruments; they did not have the properties of bank-notes, which are constantly and directly interchangeable with money. In their issue Biddle had laid himself open to attack; and in defending them he certainly did not always speak the truth, wilfully concealing or coloring facts. Moreover, his self-satisfaction and the foolish pride in his own power, which he could not conceal, led him into making imprudent boasts as to the great power the Bank could exercise over other local banks, and over the general prosperity of the country, while dilating upon its good conduct in not using this power to the disadvantage of the public. All this was playing into Benton's hands. He showed some of the evils of the branch-draft system, although apparently not seeing others that were quite as important. He attacked the Bank for some real and many imaginary wrongdoings; and quoted Biddle himself as an authority for the existence of powers dangerous to the welfare of the State.

The advocates of the Bank were still in the majority in both houses of Congress, and soon began preparations for pushing through a bill for the recharter. The issue began to become political. Webster, Clay, and most of the other antiadministration men were for the Bank; and so when the convention of the National Republicans, who soon afterward definitely assumed the name of Whigs, took place, they declared heartily in its favor, and nominated for the presidency its most enthusiastic supporter, Henry Clay. The Bank itself un-

questionably preferred not to be dragged into politics; but Clay, thinking he saw a chance for a successful stroke, fastened upon it, and the convention that nominated him made the fight against Jackson on the ground that he was hostile to the Bank. Even had this not already been the case no more certain method of insuring his hostility could have been adopted.

Still, however, many of Jackson's supporters were also advocates of recharter; and the bill for that purpose commanded the majority in Congress. Benton took the lead in organizing the opposition, not with the hope of preventing its passage, but "to attack incessantly, assail at all points, display the evil of the institution, rouse the people, and prepare them to sustain the veto." In other words, he was preparing for an appeal to the people, and working to secure an anti-Bank majority in the next Congress. He instigated and prepared the investigation into the affairs of the Bank, which was made in the House, and he led the harassing parliamentary warfare carried on against the rechartering bill in the Senate. He himself seems to have superintended the preparation of the charges which were investigated by the House. A great flurry was made over them, Benton and all his friends claiming that they were fully substantiated; but the only real point scored was that against the branch drafts. Benton, with the majority of the committee of investigation, had the loosest ideas as to what a bank ought to do, loud though they were in denunciation of what this particular Bank was alleged to have done.

Webster made the great argument in favor of the recharter bill. Benton took the lead in opposition, stating, what was probably true—that the bill was brought up so long before the charter expired for political rea-

sons, and criticising it as premature; a criticism unfortunately applicable with even greater force to Jackson's message. His speech was largely mere talking against time, and he wandered widely from the subject. Among other things he invoked the aid of the principle of States' rights, because the Bank then had power to establish branches in any State, whether the latter liked it or not, and free from State taxation. He also appealed to the Western members as such, insisting that the Bank discriminated against their section of the country in favor of the East; the facts being that the shrewdness and commercial morality of the Northeast, particularly of New England, saved them from the evils brought on the Westerners by the foolishness with which they abused their credit and the laxness with which they looked on monetary obligations. But in spite of all that Benton could do the bill passed both houses, the Senate voting in its favor by twenty-eight ayes against twenty nays.

Jackson, who never feared anything, and was more than ready to accept the fight which was in some measure forced on him, yet which in some degree he had courted, promptly vetoed the bill in a message which stated some truths forcibly and fearlessly, which developed some very queer constitutional and financial theories, and which contained a number of absurdities, evidently put in, not for the benefit of the Senate, but to influence voters at the coming presidential election. The leaders of the opposition felt obliged to make a show of trying to pass the bill over the veto in order to get a chance to answer Jackson. Webster again opened the argument. Clay made the fiercest onslaught, assailing the President personally, besides attacking the veto power, and trying to discredit its use.

But the presidential power of veto is among the best features of our government, and Benton had no difficulty in making a good defense of it; although many of the arguments adduced by him in its favor were entirely unsound, being based on the wholly groundless assumption that the function of the President corresponded to that of the ancient Roman tribune of the people, and was supposed to be exercised in the interests of the people to control the legislature—thus wilfully overlooking the fact that the legislature also was elected by the people. When on his ultrademocratic hobby Benton always rode very loose in the saddle, and with little knowledge of where he was going. Clay and Benton alike drew all sorts of analogies between the state of affairs in the United States and that formerly prevailing in France, England, and above all in the much-suffering republics of antiquity. Benton insisted that the Bank had wickedly persuaded the West to get in debt to it so as to have that section in its power, and that the Western debt had been created with a view to political engineering; the fact being that the Westerners had run into debt purely by their own fault, and that the Bank itself was seriously alarmed at the condition of its Western branches. The currency being in much worse shape in the West than in the Northeast, gold and silver naturally moved toward the latter place; and this result of their own shortcomings was again held up as a grievance of the Westerners against the Bank. He also read a severe lecture on the interests of party discipline to the Democrats who had voted for the recharter, assuring them that they could not continue to be both for the Bank and for Jackson. The Jacksonian Democracy, nominally the party of the multitude, was in reality the nearest approach the United States has ever

seen to the "one-man power"; and to break with Jackson was to break with the Democratic party. The alternative of expulsion or of turning a somersault being thus plainly presented to the recalcitrant members, they for the most part chose the latter, and performed the required feat of legislative acrobatics with the most unobtrusive and submissive meekness. The debate concluded with a sharp and undignified interchange of personalities between the Missouri and Kentucky senators, Clay giving Benton the lie direct, and the latter retorting in kind. Each side, of course, predicted the utter ruin of the country, if the other prevailed. Benton said that, if the Bank conquered, the result would be the establishment of an oligarchy, and then of a monarchy, and finally the death of the Republic by corruption. Webster stated as his belief that, if the sentiments of the veto message received general approbation, the Constitution could not possibly survive its fiftieth year. Webster, however, in that debate, showed to good advantage. Benton was no match for him, either as a thinker or as a speaker; but with the real leader of the Whig party, Henry Clay, he never had much cause to fear comparison.

All the State banks were of course rabidly in favor of Jackson; and the presidential election of 1832 was largely fought on the Bank issue. In Pennsylvania, however, the feeling for the Bank was only less strong than that for Jackson; and accordingly that Bœotian community sapiently cast its electoral votes for the latter, while instructing its senators and representatives to support the former. But the complete and hopeless defeat of Clay by Jackson sealed the fate of the Bank. Jackson was not even content to let it die naturally by the lapse of its charter. His attitude toward it so far

had been one for which much could be said; indeed, very good grounds can be shown for thinking his veto proper. But of the impropriety of his next step there could be no possible question. Congress had passed a resolution declaring its belief in the safety of the United States deposits in the Bank; but the President, in the summer of 1833, removed these deposits and placed them in certain State banks. He experienced some difficulty in getting a secretary of the treasury who would take such a step; finally he found one in Taney.

The Bank memorialized Congress at once; and the antiadministration majority in the Senate forthwith took up the quarrel. They first rejected Jackson's nominations for bank directors, and then refused to confirm Taney himself. Two years later Jackson made the latter Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, in which position he lived to do even more mischief than he had time or opportunity to accomplish as secretary of the treasury.

Benton was the administration champion in the Senate. Opposed to him were Webster and Clay, as leaders of the Whigs, supported for the time being by Calhoun. The feeling of Clay and Calhoun against the President was bitterly personal, and was repaid by his rancorous hatred. But Webster, though he was really on most questions even more antagonistic to the ideas of the Jacksonian school, always remained personally on good terms with its leaders.

Clay introduced a resolution directing the return of the deposits; Benton opposed it; it passed by a vote of twenty-eight to eighteen, but was lost in the House. Clay then introduced a resolution demanding to know from the President whether the paper alleged to have been published by his authority as having been read

to the Cabinet, in relation to the removal of the deposits, was genuine or not; and, if it was, asking for a copy. Benton opposed the motion, which nevertheless passed. But the President refused to accede to the demand. Meanwhile the new departure in banking, inaugurated by the President, was working badly. One of the main grounds for removing the deposits was the allegation that they were used to debauch politics. This was never proved against the old United States Bank; but under Jackson's administration, which corrupted the public service in every way, the deposits became fruitful sources of political reward and bribery.

Clay then introduced his famous resolution censuring the President for his action, and supported it in a long and fiery speech; a speech which, like most of Clay's, was received by his followers at the time with rapture, but in which this generation fails to find the sign of that remarkable ability with which his own contemporaries credited the great Kentuckian. He attacked Jackson with fierce invective, painting him as an unscrupulous tyrant, who was inaugurating a revolution in the government of the Union. But he was outdone by Calhoun, who, with continual interludes of complacent references to the good already done by the Nullifiers, assailed Jackson as one of a band of artful, corrupt, and cunning politicians, and drew a picture even more lurid than Clay's of the future of the country, and the danger of impending revolution. Webster's speeches were more self-contained in tone. Benton was the only Jacksonian senator who could contend with the great Nullifier and the two great Whigs, and he replied at length, and in much the same style as they had spoken.

The Senate was flooded with petitions in favor of the

Bank, which were presented with suitable speeches by the leading Whigs. Benton ridiculed the exaggerated tone of alarm in which these petitions were drawn, and declared that the panic, excitement, and suffering existing in business circles throughout the country were due to the deliberate design of the Bank, and afforded a fresh proof that the latter was a dangerous power to the State.

The resolution of censure was at last passed by a vote of twenty-six to twenty, and Jackson, in a fury, sent in a written protest against it, which the Senate refused to receive. The excitement all over the country was intense throughout the struggle. The suffering, which was really caused by the President's act, but which was attributed by his supporters to the machinations of the Bank, was very real; even Benton admitted this, although contending that it was not a natural result of the policy pursued, but had been artificially excited—or, as he very clumsily phrased it, "though fictitious and forged, yet the distress was real, and did an immensity of damage." Neither Jackson nor Benton yielded an inch to the outside pressure; the latter was the soul of the fight in Congress, making over thirty speeches during the struggle.

During the debate on receiving the President's protest, Benton gave notice of his intention at an early day to move to expunge from the journal the resolution of censure. This idea was entirely his own, and he gave the notice without having consulted anybody. It was, however, a motion after Jackson's own heart, as the latter now began to look upon the affair as purely personal to himself. His party accepted this view of the matter with a servile alacrity only surpassed by the way in which its leaders themselves bowed down before the

mob; and for the next two years the State elections were concerned purely with personal politics, the main point at issue in the choice for every United States senator being, whether he would or would not support Benton's expunging resolution. The whole affair seems to us so puerile that we can hardly understand the importance attached to it by the actors themselves. But the men who happened at that period to be the leaders in public affairs were peculiarly and frankly incapable of separating in their minds matters merely affecting themselves from matters affecting their constituents. Each firmly believed that if he was not the whole State, he was at least a most important fraction of it; and this was as plainly seen in Webster's colossal egoism and the frank vanity of Henry Clay as in Benton's ponderous self-consciousness and the all-pervading personality of Andrew Jackson.

Some of the speeches on the expunging resolution show delicious, although entirely unconscious, humor. If there ever was a wholly irrational state of mind it was that in which the Jacksonians perpetually kept themselves. Every canvass on Jackson's behalf was one of sound, fury, and excitement, of appeal to the passions, prejudices, and feelings, but never the reason, of the people. A speech for him was generally a mere frantic denunciation of whatever and whoever was opposed to him, coupled with fulsome adulation of "the old hero." His supporters rarely indeed spoke to the cool judgment of the country, for the very excellent reason that the cool judgment of the country was apt to be against them. Such being the case, it is amusing to read in Benton's speech on receiving the protest the following sentences, apparently uttered in solemn good faith, and with sublime unconsciousness of irony:

"To such a community [the American body politic] —in an appeal on a great question of constitutional law to the understandings of such a people—declamation, passion, epithets, opprobrious language, will stand for nothing. They will float harmless and unheeded through the empty air, and strike in vain upon the ear of a sober and dispassionate tribunal. Indignation, real or affected; wrath, however hot; fury, however enraged; asseverations, however violent; denunciation, however furious, will avail nothing. Facts, inexorable facts, are all that will be attended to; reason, calm and self-possessed, is all that will be listened to."

The description of the mass of Jacksonian voters as forming "a sober and dispassionate tribunal" is an artistic touch of fancy quite unique, but admirably characteristic of Benton, whose statements always rose vigorously to the necessities of the occasion.

Webster, in an effort to make the best of untoward circumstances, brought in a bill to recharter the Bank for a short period, at the same time doing away with some of the features that were objectionable in the old charter. This bill might have passed, had it not been opposed by the extreme Bank men, including Clay and Calhoun. In the course of the debate over it Benton delivered a very elaborate and carefully studied speech in favor of hard money and a currency of the precious metals; a speech which is to this day well worth careful reading. Some of his financial theories were crude and confused; but on the main question he was perfectly sound. Both he and Jackson deserve great credit for having done much to impress the popular mind with the benefit of hard, that is to say honest, money. Benton was the strongest hard-money man then in public life, being, indeed, popularly nicknamed "Old Bullion."

He thoroughly appreciated that a metallic currency was of more vital importance to the laboring men and to men of small capital generally than to any of the richer classes. A metallic currency is always surer and safer than a paper currency; where it exists a laboring man dependent on his wages need fear less than any other member of the community the evils of bad banking. Benton's idea of the danger to the masses from "the money power" was exaggerated; but in advocating a sound gold currency he took the surest way to overcome any possible dangerous tendency. A craze for "soft," or dishonest, money—a greenback movement, or one for short-weight silver dollars—works more to the disadvantage of the whole mass of the people than even to that of the capitalists; it is a move directly in the interests of "the money power," which its loud-mouthed advocates are ostensibly opposing in the interests of democracy.

Benton continued his speeches. The panic was now subsiding; there had not been time for Jackson's ruinous policy of making deposits in numerous State banks, and thereby encouraging wild inflation of credit, to bear fruit and, as it afterward did, involve the whole country in financial disaster. Therefore Benton was able to exult greatly over the favorable showing of affairs in the report of the secretary of the treasury. He also procured the passage of a gold currency law, which, however, fixed the ratio of value between gold and silver at sixteen to one; an improper proportion, but one which had prevailed for three centuries in the Spanish-American countries, from which he copied it. In consequence of this law gold, long banished, became once more a circulating medium of exchange.

The Bank of the United States afterward was turned

into the State Bank of Pennsylvania; it was badly managed and finally became insolvent. The Jacksonians accepted its downfall as a vindication of their policy; but in reality it was due to causes not operative at the time of the great struggle between the President and the Senate over its continued existence. Certainly by no possible financial policy could it have produced such wide-spread ruin and distress as did the system introduced by Jackson.

Long after the Bank controversy had lost all practical bearing it continued to be agitated by the chief parties to it, who still felt sore from the various encounters. Jackson assailed it again in his message; a friendly committee of the Senate investigated it and reported in its favor, besides going out of their way to rake up charges against Jackson and Benton. The latter replied in a long speech, and became involved in personalities with the chairman, Tyler, of Virginia. Neither side paid attention to any but the partisan aspect of the question, and the discussions were absolutely profitless.

The whole matter was threshed over again and again, long after nothing but chaff was left, during the debates on Benton's expunging resolution. Few now would defend this resolution. The original resolution of censure may have been of doubtful propriety; but it was passed, was entered on the record, and had become a part of the journal of the Senate. It would have been perfectly proper to pass another resolution condemning or reversing the original one, and approving the course of the President; but it was in the highest degree improper to set about what was in form falsifying the record. Still, Benton found plenty of precedents in the annals of other legislative bodies for what he proposed to do, and the country, as a whole, backed him up heartily.

He was further stimulated by the knowledge that there was probably no other legislative act in which Jackson took such intense interest, or which could so gratify his pride; the mortification to Clay and Calhoun would be equally great. Benton's motion failed more than once, but the complexion of the Senate was rapidly changed by the various States substituting Democratic for Whig or anti-Jackson senators. Some of the changes were made, as in Virginia, by senators refusing to vote for the expunging resolution, as required by the State legislatures, and then resigning their seats, pursuant to a ridiculous theory of the ultra-Democrats, which, if carried out, would completely nullify the provision for a six years' senatorial term. Finally, at the very close of Jackson's administration, Benton found himself with a fair majority behind him, and made the final move. His speech was of course mainly filled with a highly colored account of the blessings wrought for the American people by Andrew Jackson, and equally of course the latter was compared at length to a variety of ancient Roman worthies. The final scene in the Senate had an element of the comic about it. The expungers held a caucus and agreed to sit the session out until the resolution was passed; and with prudent forethought Benton, well aware that when hungry and tired his followers might show less inflexibility of purpose, provided in an adjoining committee room "an ample supply of cold hams, turkeys, rounds of beef, pickles, wines, and cups of hot coffee," wherewith to inspirit the faint-hearted.

Fortified by the refreshments, the expungers won a complete victory. If the language of Jackson's admirers was overdrawn and strained to the last degree in lauding him for every virtue that he had or had not, it must

be remembered that his opponents went quite as far wrong on the other side in their denunciations and extravagant prophecies of gloom. Webster made a very dignified and forcible speech in closing the argument against the resolution, but Calhoun and Clay were much less moderate—the latter drawing a vivid picture of a rapidly approaching reign of lawless military violence and asserting that his opponents had "extinguished one of the brightest and purest lights that ever burnt at the altar of civil liberty." As a proper finale Jackson, to show his appreciation, gave a great dinner to the expungers and their wives, Benton sitting at the head of the table. Jackson and Benton solemnly thought that they were taking part in a great act of justice, and were amusingly unable to see the comic side of their acts. They probably really believed most of their own denunciations of the Bank, and very possibly thought that the wickedness of its followers might tempt them to do any desperate deed. At any rate they enjoyed posing alike to themselves and to the public as persons of antique virtue, who had risked both life and reputation in a hazardous but successful attempt to save the liberties of the people from the vast and hostile forces of the aristocratic "money power."

The best verdict on the expunging resolution was given by Webster when he characterized the whole affair as one which, if it were not regarded as a ruthless violation of a sacred instrument, would appear to be little elevated above the character of a contemptible farce.

CHAPTER VII

THE DISTRIBUTION OF THE SURPLUS

Benton was supremely self-satisfied with the part he had played in the struggle with the Bank. But very few thinking men would now admit that his actions, as a whole, on the occasion in question, were to his credit, although in the matter of the branch drafts he was perfectly right, and in that of the recharter at least occupied defensible ground. His general views on monetary matters, however, were sound, and on some of the financial questions that shortly arose he occupied a rather lonely pre-eminence of good sense among his fellow senators; such being particularly the case as regards the various mischievous schemes in relation to disposing of the public lands, and of the money drawn from their sale. The revenue derived from all sources, including these sales of public lands, had for some years been much in excess of the governmental expenses, and a surplus had accumulated in the Treasury. This surplus worked more damage than any deficit would have done.

There were gold-mines in the Southern States, which had been growing more and more productive; and, as the cost of freighting the bullion was excessive, a bill was introduced to establish branch mints at New Orleans and in the gold regions of Georgia and North Carolina. Benton advocated this strongly, as a constitutional right of the South and West, and as greatly in the interest of those two sections; and also as being another move in favor of a hard-money currency as op-

posed to one of paper. There was strong opposition to the bill; many of the Whigs having been carried so far by their heated devotion to the United States Bank in its quarrel that they had become paper-money men. But the vote was neither sectional nor partisan in its character. Clay led the opposition, while Webster supported Benton.

Before this time propositions to distribute among the States the revenue from the public lands had become common; and they were succeeded by propositions to distribute the lands themselves, and then by others to distribute all the surplus revenue. Calhoun finally introduced an amendment to the Constitution to enable the surplus in the Treasury during the next eight years to be distributed among the various States; the estimate being that for the time mentioned there would be about nine millions surplus annually. Benton attacked the proposal very ably, showing the viciousness of a scheme which would degrade every State government into the position of a mendicant, and would allow money to be collected from the citizens with one hand in order to be given back to them with the other; and also denying that the surplus would reach anything like the dimensions indicated. He ridiculed the idea of making a constitutional amendment to cover so short a period of time; and stated that he would greatly prefer to see the price paid for public lands by incoming settlers reduced, and what surplus there was expended on strengthening the defenses of the United States against foreign powers. This last proposition was eminently proper. We were then, as always, in our chronic state of utter defenselessness against any hostile attack, and yet were in imminent danger of getting embroiled with at least one great power—France. Our danger is always that we shall

spend too little, and not too much, in keeping ourselves prepared for foreign war. Calhoun's resolution was a total failure, and was never even brought to a vote.

Benton's proposed method of using the surplus came in with peculiar propriety on account of the conduct of the Whigs and Nullifiers in joining to oppose the appropriation of three millions of dollars for purposes of defense, which was provided for in the general fortification bill. The House passed this bill by a great majority. It was eminently proper that we should at once take steps to provide for the very possible contingency of a war with France, as the relations with that power were growing more threatening every day; but the opposition of the anti-Jackson men to the administration and to all its measures had become so embittered that they were willing to run the risk of seriously damaging the national credit and honor, if they could thereby score a point against their political adversaries. Accordingly, under the lead of Webster, Clay, and Calhoun, they defeated the bill in the Senate, in spite of all that could be done to save it by Benton, who, whatever his faults, was always patriotic. The appropriation had been very irregular in form, and under ordinary circumstances there would have been good justification for inquiring into it before permitting its passage; but under the circumstances its defeat at the moment was most unfortunate. For the President had been pressing France, even to the point of tolerably plain threats, in order to induce or compel her to fulfil the conditions of the recent treaty by which she had bound herself to pay a considerable indemnity, long owing by her to the United States for depredations on our commerce. Now she menaced war, avowedly on the ground that we were unprepared to resist her; and

this vote in the Senate naturally led the French Government to suppose that Jackson was not sustained by the country in the vigorous position which he had assumed. In speaking on the message of the President which alluded to this state of affairs, Benton strongly advocated our standing firmly for our rights, making a good speech, which showed much historical learning. He severely reproached the antiadministration senators for their previous conduct in causing the loss of the defense appropriation bill, and for preferring to do worse than waste the surplus by distributing it among the different States instead of applying it according to the provisions of that wise measure.

This brought on a bitter wrangle, in which Benton certainly had the best of it. Calhoun was in favor of humiliating non-resistance; he never advocated warlike measures when the dignity of the nation was at stake, fond though he was of threatening violence on behalf of slavery or that form of secession known as nullification. Benton quoted from speeches in the French Chamber of Deputies to show that the French were encouraged to take the position that they did on account of the action of the Senate, and the disposition shown by a majority among the senators rather to pull down the President in a party struggle than to uphold him in his efforts to save the national honor in a contest with France. A curious feature of his speech was that in which he warned the latter power that, in the event of a conflict, it would have to do with a branch of the same race which, "from the days of Agincourt and Crecy, of Blenheim and Ramillies, down to the days of Salamanca and Waterloo, has always known perfectly well how to deal with the impetuous and fiery courage of the French." This sudden outcropping of what, in

Bentonian English, might be called Pan-Anglo-Saxon sentiment was all the more surprising inasmuch as both Benton himself and the party to which he belonged were strongly anti-English in their way of looking at our foreign policy, at least so far as North America was concerned. In the end France yielded, though trying to maintain her dignity by stating that she had not done so, and the United States received what was due them.

Benton strongly opposed the payment by the United States of the private claims of its citizens for damages arising from the French spoliations at the end of the last century. He pointed out that the effort to pay such claims, scores of years after the time of their accruing, rarely benefits any of the parties originally in interest, and can only do real service to dishonest speculators. His speech on this matter would not be bad reading for some of the pension-jobbing congressmen of the present day and their supporters; but as concerned these French claims he could have been easily answered.

In the controversy over the bill introduced by Clay, to distribute the revenue derived from the public lands among the States for the next five years, Benton showed to great advantage compared both to the introducer of the bill himself, and to Webster, his supporter. He had all along taken the view of the land question that would be natural to a far-seeing Western statesman desirous of encouraging immigration. He wished the public lands to be sold in small parcels to actual settlers, at prices that would allow any poor man who was thrifty to take up a claim. He had already introduced a bill to sell them at graduated prices, the minimum being established at a dollar and twenty-five cents an acre; but if land remained unsold at this rate for three years it was then to be sold for what it would bring in

the market. This bill passed the Senate, but failed in the House.

In opposing Clay's distribution scheme Benton again brought forward his plan of using the surplus to provide for the national defenses, and in his speech showed the strongly national turn of his mind, saying:

"In this great system of national defense the whole Union is equally interested; for the country, in all that concerns its defenses, is but a unit, and every section is interested in the defense of every other section, and every individual citizen is interested in the defense of the whole population. It is in vain to say that the navy is on the sea, and the fortifications on the seaboard, and that the citizens in the interior states, or in the valley of the Mississippi, have no interest in these remote defenses. Such an idea is mistaken and delusive; the inhabitant of Missouri or of Indiana has a direct interest in keeping open the mouths of the rivers, defending the seaport towns, and preserving a naval force that will protect the produce of his labor in crossing the ocean and arriving safely in foreign markets."

Benton's patriotism always included the whole country in spite of the strength of his local sympathies.

The bill passed the Senate by a rather close vote, and went to the House, where it soon became evident that it was doomed to failure. There was another bill, practically of much the same import, before the Senate, providing for the distribution of the surplus among the States in proportion to their electoral votes, but omitting the excellent proviso concerning the defenses. To suit the views of Calhoun and the sticklers for strict construction generally, the form of this rival bill was changed, so that the "distribution" purported to be a "deposit" merely; the money being nominally only

loaned to the States, who pledged their faith to return it when Congress should call for it. As it was of course evident that such a loan would never be repaid, the substitution of "deposit" for "distribution" can only be regarded as a verbal change to give the doctrinaires a loophole for escape from their previous position; they all took advantage of it, and the bill received overwhelming support and was passed by both houses.

Benton, however, stood out against it to the last, and in a very powerful speech foretold the evils which the plan would surely work. He scornfully exposed the way in which some of the members were trying, by a trick of wording, to hide the nature of the bill they were enacting into a law, and thus to seem to justify themselves for the support they were giving it. "It is in name a deposit; in form, a loan; in essence and design, a distribution," said Benton. He ridiculed the attitude of the hair-splitting strict constructionists, like Calhoun, who had always pretended most scrupulously to respect the exact wording of the Constitution, and who had previously refused to vote for distribution on the ground that it was unconstitutional:

"At the commencement of the present session a proposition was made [by Calhoun] to amend the Constitution, to permit this identical distribution to be made. That proposition is now upon our calendar, for the action of Congress. All at once it is discovered that a change of name will do as well as a change of the Constitution. Strike out the word 'distribute' and insert the word 'deposit,' and incontinently the impediment is removed; the constitutional difficulty is surmounted, and the distribution can be made."

He showed that to the States themselves the moneys distributed would either be useless, or else—and much

more probably—they would be fruitful sources of corruption and political debauchery. He was quite right. It would have been very much better to have destroyed the surplus than to have distributed it as was actually done. None of the States gained any real benefit by the transaction; most were seriously harmed. At the best, the money was squandered in the rage for public improvements that then possessed the whole people; often it was stolen outright, or never accounted for. In the one case, it was an incentive to extravagance; in the other, it was a corruption fund. Yet the popular feeling was strongly in favor of the measure at the time, and Benton was almost the only public man of note who dared to resist it. On this occasion, as in the closing act of the struggle with the Nullifiers, he showed more backbone than did his great chief; for Jackson signed the bill, although criticising it most forcibly and pungently.

The success of this measure naturally encouraged the presentation of others. Clay attempted to revive his land-money distribution bill, but was defeated, mainly through Benton's efforts. Three or four other similar schemes, including one of Calhoun's, also failed. Finally a clause providing for a further "deposit" of surplus moneys with the States was tacked to a bill appropriating money for defenses, thereby loading it down so that it was eventually lost. In the Senate the "deposit" amendment was finally struck out, in spite of the opposition of Clay, Calhoun, and Webster. Throughout the whole discussion of the distribution of the surplus Benton certainly shines by comparison with any one of his three great senatorial rivals.

He shows to equally great advantage compared to them in the part taken by him in reference to Jackson's

so-called specie circulars. The craze for speculation had affected the sales of public lands, which were increasing at an extraordinary rate, nearly twenty-five million dollars' worth being sold in 1836. As a rule, the payments were made in the notes of irresponsible banks, gotten up in many cases by the land speculators themselves. The sales were running up to five millions a month, with prospect of a boundless increase, so that all the public land bade fair to be converted into inconvertible paper. Benton had foreseen the evil results attending such a change, and, though well aware that he was opposing powerful interests in his own section of the country, had already tried to put a stop to it by law. In his speech he had stated that the unprecedented increase in the sale of public lands was due to the accommodations received by speculators from worthless banks, whose notes in small denominations would be taken to some distant part of the country, whence it would be a long time before they were returned and presented for payment. The speculators, with paper of which the real value was much below par, could outbid settlers and cultivators who could only offer specie, or notes that were its equivalent. He went on to say that "the effect was equally injurious to every interest concerned—except the banks and the speculators: it was injurious to the treasury, which was filling up with paper; to the new states, which were flooded with paper; and to settlers and cultivators, who were outbid by speculators loaded with this borrowed paper. A return to specie payments for lands was the remedy for all these evils."

Benton's reasoning was perfectly sound. The effects on settlers, on the new States, and on the government itself were precisely such as he described, and the pro-

posed remedy was the right one. But his bill failed; for the Whigs, including even Webster, had by this time worked themselves up until they were fairly crazy at the mere mention of paper-money banks.

Jackson, however, not daunted by the fate of the bill, got Benton to draw up a Treasury order, and had it issued. This served the same purpose, as it forbade the land-offices to receive anything but gold and silver in payment for land. It was not issued until Congress had adjourned, for fear that body might counteract it by a law; and this was precisely what was attempted at the next session, when a joint resolution was passed rescinding the order, and practically endeavoring to impose the worthless paper currency of the States upon the federal government. Benton stood almost alone in the fight he made against this resolution, although the right of the matter was so plainly on his side. In his speech he foretold clearly the coming of the great financial crisis that was then near at hand. The resolution, however, amounted to nothing, as it turned out, for it was passed so late in the session that the President, by simply withholding his signature from it, was enabled to prevent it from having effect.

CHAPTER VIII

THE SLAVE QUESTION APPEARS IN POLITICS

Toward the close of Jackson's administration, slavery for the first time made its permanent appearance in national politics; although for some years yet it had little or no influence in shaping the course of political movements. In 1833 the abolition societies of the North came into prominence; they had been started a couple of years previously.

Black slavery was such a grossly anachronistic and un-American form of evil, that it is difficult to discuss calmly the efforts to abolish it, and to remember that many of these efforts were calculated to do, and actually did, more harm than good. We are also very apt to forget that it was perfectly possible and reasonable for enlightened and virtuous men, who fully recognized it as an evil, yet to prefer its continuance to having it interfered with in a way that would produce even worse results. Black slavery in Hayti was characterized by worse abuse than ever was the case in the United States; yet, looking at the condition of that republic now, it may well be questioned whether it would not have been greatly to her benefit in the end to have had slavery continue a century or so longer—its ultimate extinction being certain—rather than to have had her attain freedom as she actually did, with the results that have flowed from her action. When an evil of colossal size exists, it is often the case that there is no possible way

of dealing with it that will not itself be fraught with baleful results. Nor can the ultraphilanthropic method be always, or even often, accepted as the best. If there is one question upon which the philanthropists of the present day, especially the more emotional ones, are agreed, it is that any law restricting Chinese immigration is an outrage; yet it seems incredible that any man of even moderate intelligence should not see that no greater calamity could now befall the United States than to have the Pacific slope fill up with a Mongolian population.

The cause of the Abolitionists has had such a halo shed round it by the after course of events, which they themselves in reality did very little to shape, that it has been usual to speak of them with absurdly exaggerated praise. Their courage, and for the most part their sincerity, cannot be too highly spoken of, but their share in abolishing slavery was far less than has commonly been represented; any single non-abolitionist politician, like Lincoln or Seward, did more than all the professional Abolitionists combined really to bring about its destruction. The abolition societies were only in a very restricted degree the causes of the growing feeling in the North against slavery; they are rather to be regarded as themselves manifestations or accompaniments of that feeling. The antislavery outburst in the Northern States over the admission of Missouri took place a dozen years before there was an abolition society in existence; and the influence of the professional Abolitionists upon the growth of the antislavery sentiment as often as not merely warped it and twisted it out of proper shape—as when at one time they showed a strong inclination to adopt disunion views, although it was self-evident that by no possibility could slavery

be abolished unless the Union was preserved. Their tendency toward impracticable methods was well shown in the position they assumed toward him who was not only the greatest American, but also the greatest man, of the nineteenth century; for during all the terrible four years that sad, strong, patient Lincoln worked and suffered for the people, he had to dread the influence of the extreme Abolitionists only less than that of the Copperheads. Many of their leaders possessed no good qualities beyond their fearlessness and truth—qualities that were also possessed by the Southern fire-eaters. They belonged to that class of men that is always engaged in some agitation or other; only it happened that in this particular agitation they were right. Wendell Phillips may be taken as a very good type of the whole. His services against slavery prior to the war should always be remembered with gratitude; but after the war, and until the day of his death, his position on almost every public question was either mischievous or ridiculous, and usually both.

When the abolitionist movement started it was avowedly designed to be cosmopolitan in character; the originators looked down upon any merely national or patriotic feeling. This again deservedly took away from their influence. In fact, it would have been most unfortunate had the majority of the Northerners been from the beginning in hearty accord with the Abolitionists; at the best it would have resulted at that time in the disruption of the Union and the perpetuation of slavery in the South.

But after all is said, the fact remains, that on the main issue the Abolitionists were at least working in the right direction. Sooner or later, by one means or another, slavery had to go. It is beyond doubt a mis-

fortune that in certain districts the bulk of the population should be composed of densely ignorant negroes, often criminal or vicious in their instincts; but such is the case, and the best, and indeed the only proper, course to pursue is to treat them with precisely the same justice that is meted out to whites. The effort to do so in time immediately past has not resulted so successfully as was hoped and expected; but nevertheless no other way would have worked as well.

Slavery was chiefly responsible for the streak of coarse and brutal barbarism which ran through the Southern character, and which marked the ferocious outcry instantly raised by the whole Southern press against the Abolitionists. There had been an abortive negro rising in Virginia almost at the same time that the abolitionist movement first came into prominence; and this fact added to the rage and terror with which the South regarded the latter. The clamor against the North was deafening; and though it soon subsided for the time being, it never afterward entirely died away. As has been shown already, there had always been a strong separatist feeling in the South; but hitherto its manifestations had been local and sporadic, never affecting all the States at the same time; for it had never happened that the cause which called forth any particular manifestation was one bearing on the whole South alike. The alien and sedition laws were more fiercely resented in Virginia and Kentucky than in South Carolina; the tariff, which so angered the latter, pleased Louisiana; and Georgia and Alabama alone were affected by the presence of great Indian communities within their borders. But slavery was an interest common to the whole South. When it was felt to be in any way menaced, all Southerners came together for its protection; and, from

the time of the rise of the Abolitionists onward, the separatist movement throughout the South began to identify itself with the maintenance of slavery, and gradually to develop greater and greater strength. Its growth was furthered and hastened by the actions of the more ambitious and unscrupulous of the Southern politicians, who saw that it offered a chance for them to push themselves forward, and who were perfectly willing to wreak almost irreparable harm to the nation if by so doing they could advance their own selfish interests. It was in reference to these politicians that Benton quoted with approval a letter from ex-President Madison, which ran:

"The danger is not to be concealed, that the sympathy arising from known causes, and the inculcated impression of a permanent incompatibility of interests between the South and the North may put it in the power of popular leaders, aspiring to the highest stations, to unite the South, on some critical occasion, in a course that will end by creating a new theatre of great, though inferior, interest. In pursuing this course the first and most obvious step is nullification, the next secession, and the last a farewell separation."

This was a pretty good forecast of the crisis that was precipitated by the greedy and reckless ambition of the secessionist leaders in 1860. The moral difference between Benedict Arnold on the one hand, and Aaron Burr or Jefferson Davis on the other, is precisely the difference that obtains between a politician who sells his vote for money and one who supports a bad measure in consideration of being given some high political position.

The Abolitionists immediately contrived to bring themselves before the notice of Congress in two ways:

by the presentation of petitions for the abolition of slavery in the District of Columbia, and by sending out to the Southern States a shoal of abolition pamphlets, newspapers, and rather ridiculous illustrated cuts. What the precise point of the last proceeding was no one can tell; the circulation of such writings as theirs in the South could not possibly serve any good purpose. But they had a right to send what they wished, and the conduct of many of the Southerners in trying to get a federal law passed to prohibit their writings from being carried in the mail was as wrong as it was foolish; while the brutal clamor raised in the South against the whole North as well as against the Abolitionists, and the conduct of certain Southern legislatures in practically setting prices on the heads of the leaders in the objectionable movement, in turn angered the North and gave the Abolitionists tenfold greater strength than they would otherwise have had.

The question first arose upon the presentation of a perfectly proper and respectful petition sent to the Senate by a society of Pennsylvania Quakers, and praying for the abolition of slavery in the District of Columbia. The District was solely under the control of Congress, and was the property of the nation at large, so that Congress was the proper and the only body to which any petition concerning the affairs of the District could be sent; and if the right of petition meant anything, it certainly meant that the people, or any portion thereof, should have the right to petition their representatives in regard to their own affairs. Yet certain Southern extremists, under the lead of Calhoun, were anxious to refuse to receive the paper. Benton voted in favor of receiving it, and was followed in his action by a number of other Southern senators. He spoke at length on the

subject, and quite moderately, even crediting the petitioners, or many of them, with being "good people, aiming at benevolent objects, and endeavoring to ameliorate the condition of one part of the human race, without inflicting calamities on another part," which was going very far indeed for a slaveholding senator of that time. He was of course totally opposed to abolition and the Abolitionists, and showed that the only immediate effect of the movement had been to make the lot of the slaves still worse, and for the moment to do away with any chance of intelligently discussing the question of emancipation. For, like many other Southerners, he fondly cherished the idea of gradual peaceful emancipation—an idea which the course of events made wholly visionary, but which, under the circumstances, might well have been realized. He proceeded to give most questionable praise to the North for some acts as outrageous and disgraceful as were ever perpetrated by its citizens, stating that:

"Their conduct was above all praise, above all thanks, above all gratitude. They had chased off the foreign emissaries, silenced the gabbling tongues of female dupes, and dispersed the assemblages, whether fanatical, visionary, or incendiary, of all that congregated to preach against evils that affected others, not themselves; and to propose remedies to aggravate the disease which they had pretended to cure. They had acted with a noble spirit. They had exerted a vigor beyond all law. They had obeyed the enactments, not of the statute-book, but of the heart."

These fervent encomiums were fully warranted by the acts of various Northern mobs, that had maltreated abolitionist speakers, broken up antislavery meetings, and committed numerous other deeds of lawless vio-

lence. But however flattered the Northerners of that generation may have been, in feeling that they thoroughly deserved Benton's eulogy, it is doubtful if their descendants will take quite the same pride in looking back to it. An amusing incident of the debate was Calhoun's attack upon one of the most subservient allies the South ever had in the Northern States; he caused to be sent up to the desk and read an abolition paper published in New Hampshire, which contained a bitter assault upon Franklin Pierce, then a member of Congress. Nominally he took this course to show that there was much greater strength in the abolition movement, and therefore much greater danger to the South, than the Northern senators were willing to admit; in reality he seems to have acted partly from wanton malice, partly from overbearing contempt for the truckling allies and apologists of slavery in the North, and partly from a desire not to see the discussion die out, but rather, in spite of his continual profession to the contrary, to see it maintained as a standing subject of irritation. He wished to refuse to receive the petitions, on the ground that they touched a subject that ought not even to be discussed; yet he must have known well that he was acting in the very way most fitted to give rise to discussion—a fact that was pointed out to him by Benton, in a caustic speech. He also took the ground that the question of emancipation affected the States exclusively, and that Congress had no more jurisdiction over the subject in the District of Columbia than she had in the State of North Carolina. This precious contribution to the true interpretation of the Constitution was so farcically and palpably false that it is incredible that he should himself have believed what he was saying. He was still smarting from the nullification con-

troversy; he had seceded from his party, and was sore with disappointed ambition; and it seems very improbable that he was honest in his professions of regret at seeing questions come up which would disturb the Union. On the contrary, much of the opposition he was continually making to supposititious federal and Northern encroachments on the rights of the South must have been merely factious, and it seems likely that, partly from a feeling of revenge and partly with the hope of gratifying his ambition, he was anxious to do all he could to work the South up to the highest pitch of irritation, and keep her there until there was a dissolution of the Union. Benton evidently thought that this was the case; and in reading the constant threats of nullification and secession which run through all Calhoun's speeches, and the innumerable references he makes to the alleged fact that he had come off victorious in his treasonable struggle over the tariff in 1833, it is difficult not to accept Benton's view of the matter. He always spoke of Calhoun with extreme aversion, and there were probably moments when he was inclined heartily to sympathize with Jackson's death-bed regret that he had not hung the South Carolina Nullifier. Doubtless in private life, or as regards any financial matters, Calhoun's conduct was always blameless; but it may well be that he has received far more credit for purity of motive in his public conduct than his actions fairly entitle him to.

Calhoun was also greatly exercised over the circulation of abolition documents in the South. At his request a committee of five was appointed to draft a bill on the subject; he was chairman, and three of the other four members were from the slave States; yet his report was so extreme that only one of the latter would

sign it with him. He introduced into it a long argument to the effect that the Constitution was a mere compact between sovereign States, and inferentially that nullification and secession were justifiable and constitutional; and then drew a vivid picture of the unspeakable horrors with which, as he contended, the action of the Northern Abolitionists menaced the South. The bill subjected to penalties any postmaster who should knowingly receive and put into the mail any publication touching slavery, to go into any State which had forbidden by law the circulation of such a publication. In discussing this bill he asserted that Congress, in refusing to pass it, would be co-operating with the Abolitionists; and then he went on to threaten as usual that in such case nullification or secession would become necessary. Benton had become pretty well tired of these threats, his attachment to the Union even exceeding his dislike to seeing slavery meddled with; and he headed the list of half a dozen Southern senators who joined with the bulk of the Northerners in defeating the bill, which was lost by a vote of twenty-five to nineteen. A few of the Northern "dough-faces" voted with Calhoun. There is a painfully striking contrast between the courage shown by Benton, a slaveholder with a slaveholding constituency, in opposing this bill, and the obsequious subserviency to the extreme Southern feeling shown on the same occasion by Wright, Van Buren, and Buchanan—fit representatives of the sordid and odious political organizations of New York and Pennsylvania.

Several other questions came up toward the end of Jackson's administration which were more or less remotely affected by the feeling about slavery. Benton succeeded in getting a bill through to extend the boun-

daries of the State of Missouri so as to take in territory lying northwest of her previous limit, the Indian title to which was extinguished by treaty. This annexed land lay north of the boundary for slave territory established by the Missouri Compromise; but Benton experienced no difficulty in getting his bill through. It was not, however, in the least a move designed in the interests of the slave power. Missouri's feeling was precisely that which would actuate Oregon or Washington Territory to-day, if either wished to annex part of northern Idaho.

The territories of Arkansas and Michigan had applied for admission into the Union as States; and as one would be a free and the other a slave State, it was deemed proper that they should come in together. Benton himself urged the admission of the free State of Michigan, while the interests of Arkansas were confided to Buchanan, of Pennsylvania. The slavery question entered but little into the matter; although some objections were raised on that score, as well as on account of the irregular manner in which the would-be States had acted in preparing for admission. The real ground of opposition to the admission of the two new States was political, as it was known that they could both be relied upon for Democratic majorities at the approaching presidential election. Many Whigs, therefore, both from the North and the South, opposed it.

The final removal of the Cherokees from Georgia and Alabama was brought about in 1836 by means of a treaty with those Indians. Largely through the instrumentality of Benton, and in spite of the opposition of Clay, Calhoun, and Webster, this instrument was ratified in the Senate by the close vote of thirty-one to fifteen. Although new slave territory was thus acquired, the

vote on the treaty was factional and not sectional, being equally divided between the Northern and the Southern States, Calhoun and six other Southern senators opposing it, chiefly from hostility to the administration. The removal of the Indians was probably a necessity; undoubtedly it worked hardship in individual instances, but on the whole it did not in the least retard the civilization of the tribe, which was fully paid for its losses; and moreover, in its new home, continued to make progress in every way until it became involved in the great Civil War, and received a setback from which it has not yet recovered. These Cherokees were almost the last Indians left in any number east of the Mississippi, and their removal solved the Indian problem so far as the old States were concerned.

Later on Benton went to some trouble to disprove the common statement that we have robbed the original Indian occupants of their lands. He showed by actual statistics that up to 1840 we had paid to the Indians eighty-five millions of dollars for land purchases, which was over five times as much as the United States gave the great Napoleon for Louisiana; and about three times as much as we paid France, Spain, and Mexico together for the purchase of Louisiana, Florida, and California; while the amount of land received in return would not equal any one of these purchases, and was but a fractional part of Louisiana or California. We paid the Cherokees for their territory exactly as much as we paid the French, at the height of their power, for Louisiana; while as to the Creek and Choctaw nations, we paid each more for their lands than we paid for Louisiana and Florida combined. The dealings of the government with the Indian have often been unwise, and sometimes unjust; but they are very far indeed

from being so black as is commonly represented, especially when the tremendous difficulties of the case are taken into account.

Far more important than any of these matters was the acknowledgment of the independence of Texas; and in this, as well as in the troubles with Mexico which sprang from it, slavery again played a prominent part, although not nearly so important at first as has commonly been represented. Doubtless the slaveholders worked hard to secure additional territory out of which to form new slave States; but Texas and California would have been in the end taken by us, had there not been a single slave in the Mississippi valley. The greed for the conquest of new lands which characterized the Western people had nothing whatever to do with the fact that some of them owned slaves. Long before there had been so much as the faintest foreshadowing of the importance which the slavery question was to assume, the West had been eagerly pressing on to territorial conquest, and had been chafing and fretting at the restraint put upon it, and at the limits set to its strivings by the treaties established with foreign powers. The first settlers beyond the Alleghanies, and their immediate successors, who moved down along the banks of the Ohio, the Cumberland, and the Tennessee, and thence out to the Mississippi itself, were not generally slaveholders; but they were all as anxious to wrest the Mississippi valley from the control of the French as their descendants were to overrun the Spanish lands lying along the Rio Grande. In other words, slavery had very little to do with the Western aggressions on Mexican territory, however it might influence the views of Southern statesmen as to lending support to the Western schemes.

The territorial boundaries of all the great powers originally claiming the soil of the West—France, Spain, and the United States—were very ill defined, there being no actual possession of the lands in dispute, and each power making a great showing on its own map. If the extreme views of any one were admitted, its adversary, for the time being, would have had nothing. Thus before the treaty of 1819 with Spain our nominal boundaries and those of the latter power in the West overlapped each other; and the extreme Western men persisted in saying that we had given up some of the territory which belonged to us because we had consented to adopt a middle line of division, and had not insisted upon being allowed the full extent of our claims. Benton always took this view of it, insisting that we had given up our rights by the adoption of this treaty. Many Southerners improved on this idea, and spoke of the desirability of "reannexing" the territory we had surrendered—endeavoring by the use of this very inappropriate word to give a color of right to their proceedings. As a matter of fact it was inevitable, as well as in the highest degree desirable for the good of humanity at large, that the American people should ultimately crowd out the Mexicans from their sparsely populated Northern provinces. But it was quite as desirable that this should not be done in the interests of slavery.

American settlers had begun to press into the outlying Spanish province of Texas before the treaty of 1819 was ratified. Their numbers went on increasing, and at first the Mexican Government, having achieved independence of Spain, encouraged their incoming. But it soon saw that their presence boded danger, and forbade further immigration; without effect, however, as the settlers and adventurers came thronging in as fast

as ever. The Americans had brought their slaves with them, and when the Mexican Government issued a decree liberating all slaves, they refused to be bound by it; and this decree was among the reasons alleged for their revolt. It has been represented as the chief if not the sole cause of the rebellion; but in reality it was not the cause at all; it was merely one of the occasions. Long before slavery had been abolished in Mexico, and before it had become an exciting question in the United States, the infant colony of Texas, when but a few months old, had made an abortive attempt at insurrection. Any one who has ever been on the frontier, and who knows anything whatever of the domineering, masterful spirit and bitter race prejudices of the white frontiersmen, will acknowledge at once that it was out of the question that the Texans should long continue under Mexican rule; and it would have been a great misfortune if they had. It was out of the question to expect them to submit to the mastery of the weaker race, which they were supplanting. Whatever might be the pretexts alleged for revolt, the real reasons were to be found in the deeply marked difference of race, and in the absolute unfitness of the Mexicans then to govern themselves, to say nothing of governing others. During the dozen years that the American colony in Texas formed part of Mexico, the government of the latter went through revolution after revolution—republic, empire, and military dictatorship following one another in bewildering succession. A state of things like this in the central government, especially when the latter belonged to a race alien in blood, language, religion, and habits of life, would warrant any community in determining to shift for itself. Such would probably have been the result even on people as sober and peaceable

as the Texan settlers were warlike, reckless, and overbearing.

But the majority of those who fought for Texan independence were not men who had already settled in that Territory, but, on the contrary, were adventurers from the States, who had come to help their kinsmen and to win for themselves, by their own prowess, homes on what was then Mexican soil. It may as well be frankly admitted that the conduct of the American frontiersmen all through this contest can be justified on no possible plea of international morality or law. Still, we cannot judge them by the same standard we should apply to the dealings between highly civilized powers of approximately the same grade of virtue and intelligence. Two nations may be contemporaneous so far as mere years go, and yet, for all that, may be existing among surroundings which practically are centuries apart. The nineteenth century on the banks of the Thames, the Seine, and the Rhine, or even of the Hudson and the Potomac, was one thing; the nineteenth century in the valley of the Rio Grande was another and quite a different thing.

The conquest of Texas should properly be classed with conquests like those of the Norse sea-rovers. The virtues and faults alike of the Texans were those of a barbaric age. They were restless, brave, and eager for adventure, excitement, and plunder; they were warlike, resolute, and enterprising; they had all the marks of a young and hardy race, flushed with the pride of strength and self-confidence. On the other hand they showed again and again the barbaric vices of boastfulness, ignorance, and cruelty; and they were utterly careless of the rights of others, looking upon the possessions of all weaker races as simply their natural prey. A band of

settlers entering Texas was troubled by no greater scruples of conscience than, a thousand years before, a ship-load of Knut's followers might have felt at landing in England; and when they were engaged in warfare with the Mexicans they could count with certainty upon assistance from their kinsfolk who had been left behind, and for the same reasons that had enabled Rolf's Norsemen on the seacoast of France to rely confidently on Scandinavian help in their quarrels with their Karling overlords. The great Texan hero, Houston, who drank hard and fought hard, who was mighty in battle and crafty in council, with his reckless, boastful courage and his thirst for changes and risks of all kinds, his propensity for private brawling, and his queerly blended impulses for good and evil, might, with very superficial alterations of character, stand as the type of an old-world Viking—plus the virtue of a deep and earnestly patriotic attachment to his whole country. Indeed his career was as picturesque and romantic as that of Harold Hardraada himself, and, to boot, was much more important in its results.

Thus the Texan struggle for independence stirred up the greatest sympathy and enthusiasm in the United States. The administration remained nominally neutral, but obviously sympathized with the Texans, permitting arms and men to be sent to their help, without hindrance, and indeed doing not a little discreditable bullying in the diplomatic dealing with Mexico, which that unfortunate community had her hands too full to resent. Still we did not commit a more flagrant breach of neutrality than, for instance, England was at the same time engaged in committing in reference to the civil wars in Spain. The victory of San Jacinto, in which Houston literally annihilated a Mexican force

twice the strength of his own, virtually decided the contest; and the Senate at once passed a resolution recognizing the independence of Texas. Calhoun wished that body to go farther, and forthwith admit Texas as a State into the Union; but Benton and his colleagues were not prepared to take such a step at so early a date, although intending of course that in the end she should be admitted. There was little opposition to the recognition of Texan independence, although a few members of the Lower House, headed by Adams, voted against it. While a Cabinet officer, and afterward as President, Adams had done all that he could to procure by purchase or treaty the very land which was afterward the cause of our troubles with Mexico.

Much the longest and most elaborate speech in favor of the recognition of Texan independence was made by Benton, to whom the subject appealed very strongly. He announced emphatically that he spoke as a Western senator, voicing the feeling of the West; and he was right. The opposition to the growth of our country on its southwestern frontier was almost confined to the Northeast; the West as a whole, free States as well as slave, heartily favored the movement. The settlers of Texas had come mainly, it is true, from the slave States; but there were also many who had been born north of the Ohio. It was a matter of comment that the guns used at San Jacinto had come from Cincinnati—and so had some of those who served them.

In Benton's speech he began by pointing out the impropriety of doing what Calhoun had done in attempting to complicate the question of the recognition of Texan independence with the admission of Texas as a State. He then proceeded to claim for us a good deal more credit than we were entitled to for our efforts to

preserve neutrality; drew a very true picture of the commercial bonds that united us to Mexico, and of the necessity that they should not be lightly broken; gave a spirited sketch of the course of the war hitherto, condemning without stint the horrible butcheries committed by the Mexicans, but touching gingerly on the savage revenge taken by the Americans in their turn; and ended by a eulogy of the Texans themselves, and their leaders.

It was the age of "spread-eagle" speeches, and many of Benton's were no exception to the rule. As a people we were yet in a condition of raw, crude immaturity; and our very sensitiveness to foreign criticism—a sensitiveness which we now find it difficult to understand—and the realization of our own awkwardness made us inclined to brag about and exaggerate our deeds. Our public speakers and writers acquired the abominable habit of speaking of everything and everybody in the United States in the superlative; and therefore, as we claimed the highest rank for all our fourth-rate men, we put it out of our power to do justice to the really first-rate ones; and on account of our continual exaggerations we were not believed by others, and hardly even believed ourselves, when we presented estimates that were truthful. When every public speaker was declared to be a Demosthenes or a Cicero, people failed to realize that we actually had, in Webster, the greatest orator of the century; and when every general who whipped an Indian tribe was likened to Napoleon, we left ourselves no words with which properly to characterize the really heroic deeds done from time to time in the grim frontier warfare. All Benton's oratory took on this lurid coloring; and in the present matter his final eulogy of the Texan warriors was greatly strained,

though it would hardly have been in his power to pay too high a tribute to some of the deeds they had done. It was the heroic age of the Southwest; though, as with every other heroic age, there were plenty of failings, vices, and weaknesses visible, if the standpoint of observation was only close enough.

CHAPTER IX

THE CHILDREN'S TEETH ARE SET ON EDGE

In his dealings with the Bank and his disposal of the deposits Jackson ate sour grapes to his heart's content; and now the teeth of his adopted child Van Buren were to be set on edge.

Van Buren was the first product of what are now called "machine politics" that was put into the presidential chair. He owed his elevation solely to his own dexterous political manipulation, and to the fact that, for his own selfish ends, and knowing perfectly well their folly, he had yet favored or connived at all the actions into which the administration had been led either through Jackson's ignorance and violence, or by the crafty unscrupulousness and limited knowledge of the Kitchen Cabinet. The people at large would never have thought of him for President of their own accord; but he had become Jackson's political legatee, partly because he had personally endeared himself to the latter, and partly because the politicians felt that he was a man whom they could trust. The Jacksonian Democracy was already completely ruled by a machine, of which the most important cogs were the countless office-holders, whom the spoils system had already converted into a band of well-drilled political mercenaries. A political machine can only be brought to a state of high perfection in a party containing very many ignorant and uneducated voters; and the Jacksonian Democracy held in its ranks the mass of the ignorance of the country. Besides this such an organization requires, in order that it may do its most effective work, to have as its leader

and figurehead a man who really has a great hold on the people at large, and who yet can be managed by such politicians as possess the requisite adroitness; and Jackson fulfilled both these conditions. The famous Kitchen Cabinet was so called because its members held no official positions, and yet were known to have Jackson more under their influence than was the case with his nominal advisers. They stood as the first representatives of a type common enough afterward, and of which Thurlow Weed was perhaps the best example. They were men who held no public position, and yet devoted their whole time to politics, and pulled the strings in obedience to which the apparent public leaders moved.

Jackson liked Van Buren because the latter had served him both personally and politically—indeed Jackson was incapable of distinguishing between a political and a personal service. This liking, however, would not alone have advanced Van Buren's interests, if the latter, who was himself a master in the New York State machine, had not also succeeded in enlisting the goodwill and self-interest of the members of the Kitchen Cabinet and the other intimate advisers of the President. These first got Jackson himself thoroughly committed to Van Buren, and then used his name and enormous influence with the masses, coupled with their own mastery of machine methods, to bring about the New Yorker's nomination. In both these moves they had been helped, and Van Buren's chances had been immensely improved, by an incident that had seemed at the time very unfortunate for the latter. When he was secretary of state, in carrying on negotiations with Great Britain relative to the West India trade, he had so far forgotten what was due to the dignity of the nation as to allude dis-

paragingly, while thus communicating with a foreign power, to the course pursued by the previous administration. This extension of party lines into our foreign diplomacy was discreditable to the whole country. The antiadministration men bitterly resented it, and emphasized their resentment by rejecting the nomination of Van Buren when Jackson wished to make him minister to England. Their action was perfectly proper, and Van Buren, by right, should have suffered for his undignified and unpatriotic conduct. But instead of this, and in accordance with the eternal unfitness of things, what really happened was that his rejection by the Senate actually helped him; for Jackson promptly made the quarrel his own, and the masses blindly followed their idol. Benton exultingly and truthfully said that the President's foes had succeeded in breaking a minister only to make a President.

Van Buren faithfully served the mammon of unrighteousness, both in his own State and, later on, at Washington; and he had his reward, for he was advanced to the highest offices in the gift of the nation. He had no reason to blame his own conduct for his final downfall; he got just as far along as he could possibly get; he succeeded because of, and not in spite of, his moral shortcomings; if he had always governed his actions by a high moral standard he would probably never have been heard of. Still, there is some comfort in reflecting that, exactly as he was made President for no virtue of his own, but simply on account of being Jackson's heir, so he was turned out of the office, not for personal failure, but because he was taken as scapegoat, and had the sins of his political fathers visited on his own head.

The opposition to the election of Van Buren was very much disorganized, the Whig party not yet having solid-

ified—indeed it always remained a somewhat fluid body. The election did not have the slightest sectional significance, slavery not entering into it, and both Northern and Southern States voting without the least reference to the geographical belongings of the candidates. He was the last true Jacksonian Democrat—Union Democrat—who became President; the South Carolina separatists and many of their fellows refused to vote for him. The Democrats who came after him, on the contrary, all had leanings to the separatist element which so soon obtained absolute control of the party, to the fierce indignation of men like Benton, Houston, and the other old Jacksonians, whose sincere devotion to the Union will always entitle them to the gratitude of every true American. As far as slavery was concerned, however, the Southerners had hitherto had nothing whatever to complain of in Van Buren's attitude. He was careful to inform them in his inaugural address that he would not sanction any attempt to interfere with the institution, whether by abolishing it in the District of Columbia or in any other way distasteful to the South. He also expressed a general hope that he would be able throughout to follow in the footsteps of Jackson.

He had hardly been elected before the ruinous financial policy to which he had been party, but of which the effects, it must in justice be said, were aggravated by many of the actions of the Whigs, began to bear fruit after its kind. The use made of the surplus was bad enough, but the withdrawal of the United States deposits from one responsible bank and their distribution among scores of others, many of which were in the most rickety condition, was a step better calculated than any other to bring about a financial crash. It gave a stimulus to extravagance, and evoked the wildest

spirit of speculation that the country had yet seen. The local banks, to whom the custody of the public moneys had been intrusted, used them as funds which they and their customers could hazard for the chance of gain; and the gambling spirit, always existent in the American mercantile community, was galvanized into furious life. The public dues were payable in the paper of these deposit banks and of the countless others that were even more irresponsible. The deposit banks thus became filled up with a motley mass of more or less worthless bank paper, which thus formed the "surplus," of which the distribution had caused Congress so much worry. Their condition was desperate, as they had been managed with the most reckless disregard for the morrow. Many of them had hardly kept as much specie in hand as would amount to one-fiftieth of the aggregate of their deposits and other immediate liabilities.

The people themselves were of course primarily responsible for the then existing state of affairs; but the government had done all in its power to make matters worse. Panics were certain to occur more or less often in so speculative and venturesome a mercantile community, where there was such heedless trust in the future and such recklessness in the use of credit. But the government, by its actions, immensely increased the severity of this particular panic, and became the prime factor in precipitating its advent. Benton tried to throw the blame mainly on the bankers and politicians, who, he alleged, had formed an alliance for the overthrow of the administration; but he made the plea more half-heartedly than usual, and probably in his secret soul acknowledged its puerility.

The mass of the people were still happy in the belief that all things were working well, and that their show

of unexampled prosperity and business activity denoted a permanent and healthy condition. Yet all the signs pointed to a general collapse at no distant date; an era of general bank suspensions, of depreciated currency, and of insolvency of the federal Treasury was at hand. No one but Benton, however, seemed able to read the signs aright, and his foreboding utterances were laughed at or treated with scorn by his fellow statesmen. He recalled the memory of the times of 1818–19, when the Treasury reports of one year showed a superfluity of revenue of which there was no want, and those of the next showed a deficit which required to be relieved by a loan; and he foretold an infinitely worse result from the inflation of the paper system, saying:

"Are we not at this moment, and from the same cause, realizing the first part—the elusive and treacherous part—of this picture? and must not the other, the sad and real sequel, speedily follow? The day of revulsion in its effects may be more or less disastrous; but come it must. The present bloat in the paper system cannot continue; violent contraction must follow enormous expansion; a scene of distress and suffering must ensue—to come of itself out of the present state of things, without being stimulated and helped on by our unwise legislation. . . . *I* am one of those who *promised* gold, not paper; *I did not join in putting down the Bank of the United States to put up a wilderness of local banks. I did not join in putting down the currency of a national bank to put up a national paper currency of a thousand local banks.* I did not strike Cæsar to make Antony master of Rome."

These last sentences referred to the passage of the act repealing the specie circular and making the notes of the banks receivable in payment of federal dues. The

act was most mischievous, and Benton's criticisms both of it and of the great Whig senator who pressed it were perfectly just; but they apply with quite as much weight to Jackson's dealings with the deposits, which Benton had defended.

Benton foresaw the coming of the panic so clearly, and was so particularly uneasy about the immediate effects upon the governmental Treasury, that he not only spoke publicly on the matter in the Senate, but even broached the subject in the course of a private conversation with the President-elect, to get him to try to make what preparations he could. Van Buren, cool, skilful, and far-sighted politician though he was, on this occasion showed that he was infected with the common delusion as to the solidity of the country's business prosperity. He was very friendly with Benton, and was trying to get him to take a position in his Cabinet, which the latter refused, preferring service in the Senate; but now he listened with scant courtesy to the warning, and paid no heed to it. Benton, an intensely proud man, would not speak again; and everything went on as before. The law distributing the surplus among the States began to take effect; under its operations drafts for millions of dollars were made on the banks containing the deposits, and these banks, already sinking, were utterly unable to honor them. It would have been impossible, under any circumstances, for the President to ward off the blow, but he might at least, by a little forethought and preparation, have saved the government from some galling humiliations. Had Benton's advice been followed, the moneys called for by the appropriation acts might have been drawn from the banks, and the disbursing officers might have been prevented from depositing in them the sums which they drew from the

Treasury to provide for their ordinary expenses; thus the government would have been spared the disgrace of being obliged to stop the actual daily payments to the public servants; and the nation would not have seen such a spectacle as its rulers presented when they had not a dollar with which to pay even a day-laborer, while at the same time a law was standing on the statute-book providing for the distribution of forty millions of nominal surplus.

No effort was made to stave off even so much of the impending disaster as was at that late date preventable; and a few days after Van Buren's inauguration the country was in the throes of the worst and most wide-spread financial panic it has ever seen. The distress was fairly appalling both in its intensity and in its universal distribution. All the banks stopped payment, and bankruptcy was universal. Bank paper depreciated with frightful rapidity, especially in the West; specie increased in value so that all the coin in the country, down to the lowest denomination, was almost immediately taken out of circulation, being either hoarded, or gathered for shipment abroad as bullion. For small change every kind of device was made use of—tokens, bank-bills for a few cents each, or brass and iron counters.

Benton and others pretended to believe that the panic was the result of a deep-laid plot on the part of the rich classes, who controlled the banks, to excite popular hostility against the Jacksonian Democracy, on account of the caste antagonism which these same richer classes were supposed to feel toward the much-vaunted "party of the people"; and as Benton's mental vision was singularly warped in regard to some subjects, it is possible that the belief was not altogether a pretense. It is en-

tirely unnecessary now seriously to discuss the proposition that it would be possible to drag the commercial classes into so wide-spread and profoundly secret a conspiracy, with such a vague end in view, and with the certainty that they themselves would be, from a business standpoint, the main sufferers.

The efforts made by Benton and the other Jacksonians to stem the tide of public feeling and direct it through the well-worn channel of suspicious fear of, and anger at, the banks, as the true authors of the general wretchedness, were unavailing; the stream swelled into a torrent and ran like a mill-race in the opposite way. The popular clamor against the administration was deafening; and if much of it was based on good grounds, much of it was also unreasonable. But a very few years before the Jacksonians had appealed to a senseless public dislike of the so-called "money power," in order to help themselves to victory; and now they had the chagrin of seeing an only less irrational outcry raised against themselves in turn, and used to oust them from their places, with the same effectiveness which had previously attended their own frothy and loud-mouthed declamations. The people were more than ready to listen to any one who could point out, or pretend to point out, the authors of, and the reasons for, the calamities that had befallen them. Their condition was pitiable; and this was especially true in the newer and Western States, where in many places there was absolutely no money at all in circulation, even the men of means not being able to get enough coin or its equivalent to make the most ordinary purchases. Trade was at a complete standstill; laborers were thrown out of employment and left almost starving; farmers, merchants, mechanics, craftsmen of every sort—all alike were in the direst dis-

tress. They naturally, in seeking relief, turned to the government, it being almost always the case that the existing administration receives more credit if the country is prosperous, and greater blame if it is not, than in either case it is rightfully entitled to. The Democracy was now held to strict reckoning, not only for some of its numerous real sins but also for a good many imaginary ones; and the change in the political aspect of many of the commonwealths was astounding. Jackson's own home State of Tennessee became strongly Whig; and Van Buren had the mortification of seeing New York follow suit; two stinging blows to the President and the ex-President. The distress was a godsend to the Whig politicians. They fairly raved in their anger against the administration, and denounced all its acts, good and bad alike, with fluent and incoherent impartiality. Indeed, in their speeches, and in the petitions which they circulated and then sent to the President, they used language that was to the last degree absurd in its violence and exaggeration, and drew descriptions of the iniquities of the rulers of the country which were so overwrought as to be merely ridiculous. The speeches about the panic, and in reference to the proposed laws to alleviate it, were remarkable for their inflation, even in that age of windy oratory.

Van Buren, Benton, and their associates stood bravely up against the storm of indignation which swept over the whole country, and lost neither head nor nerve. They needed both to extricate themselves with any credit from the position in which they were placed. In deference to the urgent wish of almost all the people an extra session of Congress was called especially to deal with the panic. Van Buren's message to this body was a really statesmanlike document, going

exhaustively into the subject of the national finances. The Democrats still held the majority in both houses, but there was so large a floating vote, and the margins were so narrow, as to make the administration feel that its hold was precarious.

The first thing to be done was to provide for the immediate wants of the government, which had not enough money to pay even its most necessary running expenses. To make this temporary provision two plans were proposed. The fourth instalment of the surplus—ten millions—was due to the States. As there was really no surplus, but a deficit instead, it was proposed to repeal the deposit law so far as it affected their fourth payment; and Treasury notes were to be issued to provide for immediate and pressing needs.

The Whigs frantically attacked the President's proposals, and held him and his party accountable for all the evils of the panic; and in truth it was right enough to hold them so accountable for part; but, after all, the harm was largely due to causes existing throughout the civilized world, and especially to the speculative folly rife among the whole American people. But it is always an easy and a comfortable thing to hold others responsible for what is primarily our own fault.

Benton did not believe, as a matter of principle, in the issue of Treasury notes, but supported the bill for that purpose on account of the sore straits the administration was in, and its dire need of assistance from any source. He treated it as a disagreeable but temporary makeshift, only allowable on the ground of the sternest and most grinding necessity. He stated that he supported the issue only because the Treasury notes were made out in such a form that they could not become currency; they were merely loan notes. Their chief

characteristic was that they bore interest; they were transferable only by indorsement; were payable at a fixed time; were not reissuable, nor of small denominations; and were to be cancelled when paid. Such being the case he favored their issue, but expressly stated that he only did so on account of the urgency of the governmental wants; and that he disapproved of any such issue until the ordinary resources of taxes and loans had been tried to the utmost and failed. "I distrust, dislike, and would fain eschew this treasury-note resource; I prefer the direct loans of 1820–21. I could only bring myself to support this present measure when it was urged that there was not time to carry a loan through in its forms; nor even then would I consent to it until every feature of a currency character had been eradicated from the bill."

A sharp struggle took place over the bill brought in by the friends of the administration and advocated by Benton, to repeal the obligation to deposit the fourth instalment of the surplus with the States. This scheme of a distribution, thinly disguised under the name of deposit to soothe the feelings of Calhoun and the other strict constructionist pundits, had worked nothing but mischief from the start; and now that there was no surplus to distribute, it would seem incredible that there should have been opposition to its partial repeal. Yet Webster, Clay, and their followers strenuously opposed even such repeal. It is possible that their motives were honest, but much more probable that they were actuated by partisan hostility to the administration, or that they believed they would increase their own popularity by favoring a plan that seemingly distributed money as a gift among the States. The bill was finally amended so as to make it imperative to pay this fourth

instalment in a couple of years; yet it was not then paid, since on the date appointed the national Treasury was bankrupt and the States could therefore never get the money—which was the only satisfactory incident in the whole proceeding. The financial theories of Jackson and Benton were crude and vicious, it is true, but Webster, Clay, and most other public men of the day seem to have held ideas on the subject that were almost, if not quite, as mischievous.

The great financial measures advocated by the administration of Van Buren, and championed with especial zeal by Benton, were those providing for an independent treasury and for hard-money payments; that is, providing that the government should receive nothing but gold and silver for its revenues, and that this gold and silver should be kept by its own officers in real, not constructive, treasuries—in strong buildings, with special officers to hold the keys. The Treasury was to be at Washington, with branches or subtreasuries at the principal points of collection and disbursement.

These measures, if successful, meant that there would be a total separation of the federal government from all banks; in the political language of the times they became known as those for the divorce of bank and State. Hitherto the local banks chosen by Jackson to receive the deposits had been actively hostile to Biddle's great bank and to its friends; but self-interest now united them all in violent opposition to the new scheme. Webster, Clay, and the Whigs generally fought it bitterly in the Senate; but Calhoun now left his recent allies and joined with Benton in securing its passage. However, it was for the time being defeated in the House of Representatives. Most of the opposition to it was characterized by sheer loud-mouthed demagogy—cries that

the government was too aristocratic to accept the money that was thought good enough for the people, and similar claptrap. Benton made a very earnest plea for hard money, and especially denounced the doctrine that it was the government's duty to interfere in any way in private business; for, as usual in times of general distress, a good many people had a vague idea that in some way the government ought to step in and relieve them from the consequences of their own folly.

Meanwhile the banks had been endeavoring to resume specie payment. Those of New York had taken steps in that direction but little more than three months after the suspension. Their weaker Western neighbors, however, were not yet in condition to follow suit; and the great bank at Philadelphia also at first refused to come in with them. But the New York banks persisted in their purpose, resumed payment a year after they had suspended, and eventually the others had to fall into line; the reluctance to do so being of course attributed by Benton to "the factious and wicked machinations" of a "powerful combined political and moneyed confederation"—a shadowy and spectral creation of vivid Jacksonian imaginations, in the existence of which he persisted in believing.

Clay, always active as the friend of the banks, introduced a resolution, nominally to quicken the approach of resumption, but really to help out precisely those weak banks which did not deserve help, making the notes of the resuming banks receivable in payment of all dues to the federal government. This was offered after the banks of New York had resumed, and when all the other solvent banks were on the point of resuming also; so its nominal purpose was already accomplished, as Benton, in a caustic speech, pointed out. He

then tore the resolution to shreds, showing that it would be of especial benefit to the insolvent and unsound banks, and would insure a repetition of the worst evils under which the country was already suffering. He made it clear that the proposition practically was to force the government to receive paper promises to pay from banks that were certain to fail, and therefore to force the government in turn to pay out this worthless paper to its honest creditors. Benton's speech was an excellent one, and Clay's resolution was defeated.

All through this bank controversy, and the other controversies relating to it, Benton took the leading part, as mouthpiece of the administration. He heartily supported the suggestion of the President, that a stringent bankrupt law against the banks should be passed. Webster stood out as the principal opponent of this measure, basing his objections mainly upon constitutional grounds; that is, questioning the right, rather than the expediency, of the proposed remedy. Benton answered him at length in a speech showing an immense amount of careful and painstaking study and a wide range of historical reading and legal knowledge; he replied point by point, and more than held his own with his great antagonist. His speech was an exhaustive study of the history and scope of bankruptcy laws against corporations. Benton's capacity for work was at all times immense; he delighted in it for its own sake, and took a most justifiable pride in his wide reading, and especially in his full acquaintance with history, both ancient and modern. He was very fond of illustrating his speeches on American affairs with continual allusions and references to events in foreign countries or in old times, which he considered to be more or less parallel to those he was discussing; and indeed he often dragged

in these comparisons when there was no particular need for such a display of his knowledge. He could fairly be called a learned man, for he had studied very many subjects deeply and thoroughly; and though he was too self-conscious and pompous in his utterances not to incur more than the suspicion of pedantry, yet the fact remains that hardly any other man has ever sat in the Senate whose range of information was as wide as his.

He made another powerful and carefully wrought speech in favor of what he called the act to provide for the divorce of bank and State. This bill, as finally drawn, consisted of two distinct parts, one portion making provision for the keeping of the public moneys in an independent treasury, and the other for the hard-money currency, which was all that the government was to accept in payment of revenue dues. This last provision, however, was struck out, and the bill thereby lost the support of Calhoun, who, with Webster, Clay, and the other Whigs, voted against it; but, mainly through Benton's efforts, it passed the Senate, although by a very slender majority. Benton, in his speech, dwelt with especial admiration on the working of the monetary system of France, and held it up as well worthy to be copied by us. Most of the points he made were certainly good ones, although he overestimated the beneficent results that would spring from the adoption of the proposed system, believing that it would put an end for the future to all panics and commercial convulsions. In reality it would have removed only one of the many causes which go to produce the latter, leaving the others free to work as before; the people at large, not the government, were mainly to blame, and even with them it was in some respects their misfortune as much as their fault. Benton's error, however, was natural; like most other

men he was unable fully to realize that hardly any phenomenon, even the most simple, can be said to spring from one cause only, and not from a complex and interwoven tissue of causation—and a panic is one of the least simple and most complex of mercantile phenomena. Benton's deep-rooted distrust of and hostility to such banking as then existed in the United States certainly had good grounds for existence.

This distrust was shown again when the bill for the recharter of the district banks came up. The specie basis of many of them had been allowed to become altogether too low; and Benton showed himself more keenly alive than any other public man to the danger of such a state of things, and argued strongly that a basis of specie amounting to one-third the total of liabilities was the only safe proportion, and should be enforced by law. He made a most forcible argument, using numerous and apt illustrations to show the need of his amendment.

Nor was the tireless Missouri senator satisfied even yet; for he introduced a resolution asking leave to bring in a bill to tax the circulation of banks and bankers, and of all corporations, companies, or individuals, issuing paper currency. One object of the bill was to raise revenue; but even more he aimed at the regulation of the currency by the suppression of small notes; and for this end the tax was proposed to be made heaviest on notes under twenty dollars, and to be annually augmented until it had accomplished its object and they had been driven out of circulation. In advocating his measure he used, as was perhaps unavoidable, some arguments that savored strongly of demagogy; but on the whole he made a strong appeal, using as precedents for the law he wished to see enacted both the then existing banking laws in England and those that

had obtained previously in the history of the United States.

Taken altogether, while the Jacksonians, during the period of Van Buren's presidency, rightly suffered for their previous financial misdeeds, yet so far as their actions at the time were concerned, they showed to greater advantage than the Whigs. Nor did they waver in their purpose even when the tide of popular feeling changed. The great financial measure of the administration, in which Benton was most interested, the independent Treasury bill, he succeeded in getting through the Senate twice; the first time it was lost in the House of Representatives; but on the second occasion, toward the close of Van Buren's term, firmness and perseverance met their reward. The bill passed the Senate by an increased majority, scraped through the House after a bitter contest, and became a law. It developed the system known as that of the Subtreasury, which has proved satisfactory to the present day.

It was during Van Buren's term that Biddle's great bank, so long the pivot on which turned the fortunes of political parties, finally tottered to its fall. It was ruined by unwise and reckless management; and Benton sang a pæan over its downfall, exulting in its fate as a justification of all that he had said and done. Yet there can be little doubt that its mismanagement became gross only after all connection with the national government had ceased; and its end, attributable to causes not originally existent or likely to exist, can hardly be rightly considered in passing judgment upon the actions of the Jacksonians in reference to it.

CHAPTER X

LAST DAYS OF THE JACKSONIAN DEMOCRACY

The difficulty and duration of a war with an Indian tribe depend less upon the numbers of the tribe itself than upon the nature of the ground it inhabits. The two Indian tribes that have caused the most irritating and prolonged struggle are the Apaches, who live in the vast, waterless, mountainous deserts of Arizona and New Mexico, and whom we are at this present moment engaged in subduing, and the Seminoles, who, from among the impenetrable swamps of Florida, bade the whole United States army defiance for seven long years; and this although neither Seminoles nor Apaches ever brought much force into the field, nor inflicted such defeats upon us as have other Indian tribes, like the Creeks and Sioux.

The conflict with the Seminoles was one of the legacies left by Jackson to Van Buren; it lasted as long as the Revolutionary War, cost thirty millions of dollars, and baffled the efforts of several generals and numerous troops, who had previously shown themselves equal to any in the world. The expense, length, and ill success of the struggle, and a strong feeling that the Seminoles had been wronged, made it a great handle for attack on the administration; and the defense was taken up by Benton, who always accepted completely the Western estimate of any form of the Indian question.

As is usually the case in Indian wars there had been much wrong done by each side; but in this instance we were the more to blame, although the Indians them-

selves were far from being merely harmless and suffering innocents. The Seminoles were being deprived of their lands in pursuance of the general policy of removing all the Indians west of the Mississippi. They had agreed to go, under pressure, and influenced, probably, by fraudulent representations; but they declined to fulfil their agreement. If they had been treated wisely and firmly they might probably have been allowed to remain without serious injury to the surrounding whites. But no such treatment was attempted, and as a result we were plunged in one of the most harassing Indian wars we ever waged. In their gloomy, tangled swamps, and among the unknown and untrodden recesses of the everglades the Indians found a secure asylum; and they issued from their haunts to burn and ravage almost all the settled part of Florida, fairly depopulating five counties; while the soldiers could rarely overtake them, and when they did, were placed at such a disadvantage that the Indians repulsed or cut off detachment after detachment, generally making a merciless and complete slaughter of each. The great Seminole leader, Osceola, was captured only by deliberate treachery and breach of faith on our part, and the Indians were worn out rather than conquered. This was partly owing to their remarkable capacities as bush-fighters, but infinitely more to the nature of their territory.

Our troops generally fought with great bravery; but there is very little else in the struggle, either as regards its origin or the manner in which it was carried on, to which an American can look back with any satisfaction. We usually group all our Indian wars together, in speaking of their justice or injustice; and thereby show flagrant ignorance. The Sioux and Cheyennes, for instance, have more often been sinning than sinned

against; for example, the so-called Chivington or Sandy Creek Massacre, in spite of certain most objectionable details, was on the whole as righteous and beneficial a deed as ever took place on the frontier. On the other hand, the most cruel wrongs have been perpetrated by whites upon perfectly peaceable and unoffending tribes like those of California, or the Nez Perçés. Yet the emasculated professional humanitarians mourn as much over one set of Indians as over the other—and indeed, on all points connected with Indian management, are as untrustworthy and unsafe leaders as would be an equal number of the most brutal white borderers. But the Seminole War was one of those where the Eastern, or humanitarian, view was more nearly correct than was any other; although even here the case was far from being entirely one-sided.

Benton made an elaborate but not always candid defense of the administration, both as to the origin and as to the prosecution of the war. He attempted to show that the Seminoles had agreed to go West, had broken their treaty without any reason, had perpetrated causeless massacres, had followed up their successes with merciless butcheries, which last statement was true; and that Osceola had forfeited all claim or right to have a flag of truce protect him. There was a certain justice in his position even on these questions, and when he came to defend the conduct of our soldiers he had the right entirely with him. They were led by the same commander, and belonged to the same regiments, that in Canada had shown themselves equal to the famous British infantry; they had to contend with the country, rather than with their enemies, as the sweltering heat, the stagnant lagoons, the quaking morasses, and the dense forests of Florida made it almost impossible for

an army to carry on a successful campaign. Moreover, the Seminoles were well armed; and many tribes of North American Indians show themselves, when with good weapons and on their own ground, more dangerous antagonists than would be an equal number of the best European troops. Indeed, under such conditions they can only be contended with on equal terms if the opposing white force is made up of frontiersmen who are as good woodsmen and riflemen as themselves, and who, moreover, have been drilled by some man like Jackson, who knows how to handle them to the best advantage, both in disciplining their lawless courage and in forcing them to act under orders and together—the lack of which discipline and power of supporting each other has often rendered an assemblage of formidable individual border fighters a mere disorderly mob when brought into the field.

The war dragged on tediously. The troops—regulars, volunteers, and militia alike—fought the Indians again and again; there were pitched battles, surprises, ambuscades, and assaults on places of unknown strength; hundreds of soldiers were slain in battle or by treachery; hundreds of settlers were slaughtered in their homes, or as they fled from them; the bloody Indian forays reached even to the outskirts of Tallahatchee and to within sight of the walls of quaint old St. Augustine. Little by little, however, the power of the Seminoles was broken; their war bands were scattered and driven from the field, hundreds of their number were slain in fight, and five times as many surrendered and were taken west of the Mississippi. The white troops marched through Florida down to and into the everglades, and crossed it backward and forward, from the Gulf of Mexico to the Atlantic Ocean; they hunted their foes from morass to

morass and from hummock to hummock; they mapped out the whole hitherto unknown country; they established numerous posts; opened hundreds of miles of wagon road; and built very many causeways and bridges. But they could not end the war. The bands of Indians broke up and entirely ceased to offer resistance to bodies of armed whites; but as individuals they continued as dangerous to the settlers as ever, prowling out at night like wild beasts from their fastnesses in the dark and fetid swamps, murdering, burning, and ravaging in all the outlying settlements, and destroying every lonely farmhouse or homestead.

There was but one way in which the war could be finally ended, and that was to have the territory occupied by armed settlers; in other words, to have it won and held exactly as almost all the land of the United States has been in the beginning. Benton introduced a bill to bring this about, giving to every such settler a good inheritance in the soil as a reward for his enterprise, toil, and danger; and the war was finished only by the adoption of this method. He supported his bill in a very effective speech, showing that the proposed way was the only one by which a permanent conquest could be effected; he himself had, when young, seen it put into execution in Tennessee and Kentucky, where the armed settlers, with their homesteads in the soil, formed the vanguard of the white advance: where the rifle-bearing backwoodsmen went forth to fight and to cultivate, living in assemblages of blockhouses at first and separating into individual settlements afterward. The work had to be done with axe, spade, and rifle alike. Benton rightly insisted that there was no longer need of a large army in Florida:

"Why, the men who are there now can find nobody

to fight! It is two years since a fight has been had. Ten men who will avoid surprises and ambuscades can now go from one end of Florida to the other. As warriors, these Indians no longer appear; it is only as assassins, as robbers, as incendiaries, that they lurk about. What is now wanted is not an army to fight, but settlers and cultivators to take possession and keep possession; and the armed cultivator is the man for that. The blockhouse is the first house to be built in an Indian country; the stockade the first fence to be put up. Within that blockhouse, or within a hollow square of blockhouses, two miles long on each side, two hundred yards apart, and enclosing a good field, safe habitations are to be found for families. Cultivation and defense then go hand in hand. The heart of the Indian sickens when he hears the crowing of the cock, the barking of the dog, the sound of the axe, and the crack of the rifle. These are the true evidences of the dominion of the white man; these are the proofs that the owner has come and means to stay, and then the Indians feel it to be time for them to go. While soldiers alone are in the country they feel their presence to be temporary; that they are mere sojourners in the land, and sooner or later must go away. It is the settler alone, the armed settler, whose presence announces the dominion, the permanent dominion, of the white man."

Benton's ideas were right, and were acted upon. It is impossible even to subdue an Indian tribe by the army alone; the latter can only pave the way for and partially protect the armed settlers who are to hold the soil.

Benton continued to take a great interest in the disposal of the public lands, as was natural in a senator from the West, where the bulk of these lands lay. He was always a great advocate of a homestead law. Dur-

ing Van Buren's administration, he succeeded in getting two or three bills on the subject through the Senate. One of these allowed lands that had been five years in the market to be reduced in price to a dollar an acre, and if they stood five years longer to go down to seventy-five cents. The bill was greatly to the interest of the Western farmer in the newer, although not necessarily the newest, parts of the country. The man who went on the newest land was in turn provided for by the pre-emption bill, which secured the privilege of first purchase to the actual settler on any lands to which the Indian title had been extinguished; to be paid for at the minimum price of public lands at the time. An effort was made to confine the benefits of this proposed law to citizens of the United States, excluding unnaturalized foreigners from its action. Benton, as representing the new States, who desired immigrants of every kind, whether foreign or native, successfully opposed this. He pointed out that there was no question of conferring political rights, which involved the management of the government, and which should not be conferred until the foreigner had become a naturalized citizen; it was merely a question of allowing the alien a right to maintain himself and to support his family. He especially opposed the amendment on account of the class of foreigners it would affect. Aliens who wished to take up public lands were not paupers or criminals, and did not belong to the shiftless and squalid foreign mob that drifted into the great cities of the seaboard and the interior; but on the contrary were among our most enterprising, hardy, and thrifty citizens, who had struck out for themselves into the remote parts of the new States and had there begun to bring the wilderness into subjection. Such men deserved to be encouraged in every

way, and should receive from the pre-emption laws the same benefits that would inure to native-born citizens. The third bill introduced, which passed the Senate but failed in the House, was one to permit the public lands sold to be immediately taxed by the States in which they lay. Originally these lands had been sold upon credit, the total amount not being paid, nor the title passed, until five years after the sale; and during this time it would have been unjust to tax them, as failure in paying the instalments to the government would have let the lands revert to the latter; but when the cash system was substituted for credit Benton believed that there was no longer reason why the new lands should not bear their share of the State burdens.

During Van Buren's administration the standard of public honesty, which had been lowering with frightful rapidity ever since, with Adams, the men of high moral tone had gone out of power, went almost as far down as it could go; although things certainly did not change for the better under Tyler and Polk. Not only was there the most impudent and unblushing rascality among the public servants of the nation, but the people themselves, through their representatives in the State legislatures, went to work to swindle their honest creditors. Many States, in the rage for public improvements, had contracted debts which they now refused to pay; in many cases they were unable, or at least so professed themselves, even to pay the annual interest. The debts of the States were largely held abroad; they had been converted into stock and held in shares, which had gone into a great number of hands, and now, of course, became greatly depreciated in value. It is a painful and shameful page in our history; and every man connected with the repudiation of the States' debts ought, if re-

membered at all, to be remembered only with scorn and contempt. However, time has gradually shrouded from our sight both the names of the leaders in the repudiation and the names of the victims whom they swindled. Two alone, one in each class, will always be kept in mind. Before Jefferson Davis took his place among the arch-traitors in our annals he had already long been known as one of the chief repudiators; it was not unnatural that to dishonesty toward the creditors of the public he should afterward add treachery toward the public itself. The one most prominent victim was described by Benton himself: "The Reverend Sydney Smith, of witty memory, but amiable withal, was accustomed to lose all his amiability, but no part of his wit, when he spoke of his Pennsylvania bonds—which, in fact, was very often."

Many of the bondholders, however, did not manifest their grief by caustic wit, but looked to more substantial relief; and did their best to bring about the assumption of the State debts, in some form, whether open or disguised, by the federal government. The British capitalists united with many American capitalists to work for some such action; and there were plenty of people in the States willing enough to see it done. Of course it would have been criminal folly on the part of the federal government to take any such step; and Benton determined to meet and check the effort at the very beginning. The London Bankers' Circular had contained a proposition recommending that the Congress of the United States should guarantee, or otherwise provide for, the ultimate payment of the debts which the States had contracted for State or local purposes. Benton introduced a series of resolutions declaring utter opposition to the proposal, both on the ground of expe-

diency and on that of constitutionality. The resolutions were perfectly proper in their purpose, but were disfigured by that cheap species of demagogy which consists in denouncing purely supposititious foreign interference, complicated by an allusion to Benton's especial pet terror, the inevitable money power. As he put it: "Foreign interference and influence are far moredangerous in the invidious intervention of the moneyed power than in the forcible invasions of fleets and armies."

An attempt was made directly to reverse the effect of the resolutions by amending them so as to provide that the public land revenue should be divided among the States, to help them in the payment of these debts. Both Webster and Clay supported this amendment, but it was fortunately beaten by a large vote.

Benton's speech, like the resolutions in support of which he spoke, was right in its purpose, but contained much matter that was beside the mark. He had worked himself into such a condition over the supposititious intrigues of the "money power"—an attack on which is almost always sure to be popular—that he was very certain to discover evidence of their existence on all, even the most unlikely, occasions; and it is difficult to think that he was not himself aware how overdrawn was his prophecy of the probable interference of foreign powers in our affairs, if the resolutions he had presented were not adopted.

The tariff had once more begun to give trouble, and the South was again complaining of its workings, aware that she was falling always more to the rear in the race for prosperity, and blindly attributing her failure to everything but the true reason—the existence of slavery. Even Benton himself showed a curiously pathetic eagerness to prove both to others and himself that the cause

of the increasing disparity in growth, and incompatibility in interest between the two sections, must be due to some temporary and artificial cause, and endeavored to hide from all eyes, even from his own, the fact that the existence of slavery was working, slowly but surely, and with steadily increasing rapidity, to rend in sunder the Union which he loved and served with such heartfelt devotion. He tried to prove that the main cause of discontent was to be found in the tariff and other laws, which favored the North at the expense of the South. At the same time he entered an eloquent plea for a warmer feeling between the sections, and pointed out the absolute hopelessness of attempting to better the situation in any way by disunion. The great Missourian could look back with fond pride and regret to the condition of the South as it was during and immediately after the Colonial days, when it was the seat of wealth, power, high living, and free-handed hospitality, and was filled to overflowing with the abounding life of its eager and turbulent sons. The change for the worse in its relative condition was real and great. He reproved his fellow Southerners for attributing this change to a single cause, the unequal working of the federal government, "which gave all the benefits of the Union to the South and all its burdens to the North"; he claimed that it was due to many other causes as well. Yet those whom he rebuked were as near right as he was; for the change *was* due in the main to only one cause—but that cause was slavery. It is almost pitiful to see the strong, stern, self-reliant statesman refusing, with nervous and passionate wilfulness, to look the danger in the face, and, instead thereof, trying to persuade himself into the belief that "the remedy lies in the right working of the Constitution; in the cessation of unequal legislation; in

the reduction of the inordinate expenses of the government; in its return to the simple, limited, and economical machine it was intended to be; and in the revival of fraternal feelings and respect for each other's rights and just complaints." Like many another man he thought, or tried to think, that by sweeping the dust from the door-sill he could somehow stave off the whirling rush of the sand-storm.

The compromise tariff of 1833 had abolished all specific duties, establishing *ad valorem* ones in their place; and the result had been great uncertainty and injustice in its working. Now whether a protective tariff is right or wrong may be open to question; but if it exists at all, it should work as simply and with as much certainty and exactitude as possible; if its interpretation varies, or if it is continually meddled with by Congress, great damage ensues. It is in reality of far less importance that a law should be ideally right than that it should be certain and steady in its workings. Even supposing that a high tariff is all wrong, it would work infinitely better for the country than would a series of changes between high and low duties. Benton strongly advocated a return to specific duties, as being simpler, surer, and better on every account. In commenting on the *ad valorem* duties, he showed how they had been adopted blindly and without discussion by the frightened, silent multitude of congressmen and senators, who jumped at Clay's compromise bill in 1833 as giving them a loophole of escape from a situation where they would have had to face evil consequences, no matter what stand they took. Benton's comment on men of this stamp deserves chronicling, from its justice and biting severity: "It (the compromise act) was passed by the aid of the votes of those—always a considerable *per centum* in

every public body—to whom the name of compromise is an irresistible attraction; amiable men, who would do no wrong of themselves, and without whom the designing could also do but little wrong."

He not only devoted himself to the general subject of the tariff in relation to specific duties, but he also took up several prominent abuses. One subject, on which he was never tired of harping with monotonous persistency, was the duty on salt. The idea of making salt free had become one which he was almost as fond of bringing into every discussion, no matter how inappropriate to the matter in hand, as he was of making irrelevant and abusive allusions to his much-enduring and long-suffering hobby, the iniquitous "money power." Benton had all the tenacity of a snapping turtle, and was as firm a believer in the policy of "continuous hammering" as Grant himself. His tenacity and his pertinacious refusal to abandon any contest, no matter what the odds were against him, and no matter how often he had to return to the charge, formed two of his most invaluable qualities, and when called into play on behalf of such an object as the preservation of the Union, cannot receive too high praise at our hands; for they did the country services so great and lasting that they should never be forgotten. It would have been fortunate indeed if Clay and Webster had possessed the fearless, aggressive courage and iron will of the rugged Missourian, who was so often pitted against them in the political arena. But when Benton's attention was firmly fixed on the accomplishment of something comparatively trivial, his dogged, stubborn, and unyielding earnestness drew him into making efforts of which the disproportion to the result aimed at was rather droll. Nothing could thwart him or turn him

aside; and though slow to take up an idea, yet, if it was once in his head, to drive it out was a simply hopeless task. These qualities were of such invaluable use to the State on so many great occasions that we can well afford to treat them merely with a good-humored laugh, when we see them exercised on behalf of such a piece of foolishness as, for example, the expunging resolution.

The repeal of the salt tax, then, was a particular favorite in Benton's rather numerous stable of hobbies, because it gave free scope for the use of sentimental as well as of economic arguments. He had the right of the question, and was not in the least daunted by his numerous rebuffs and the unvarying ill success of his efforts. Speaking in 1840, he stated that he had been urging the repeal for twelve years; and for the purpose of furnishing data with which to compare such a period of time, and without the least suspicion that there was anything out of the way in the comparison, he added, in a solemn parenthesis, that this was two years longer than the siege of Troy lasted. In the same speech was a still choicer morsel of eloquence about salt: "The Supreme Ruler of the Universe has done everything to supply his creatures with it; man, the fleeting shadow of an instant, invested with his little brief authority, has done much to deprive them of it." After which he went on to show a really extensive acquaintance with the history of salt taxes and monopolies, and with the uses and physical structure and surroundings of the mineral itself—all which might have taught his hearers that a man may combine much erudition with a total lack of the sense of humor. The salt tax is dragged, neck and heels, into many of Benton's speeches much as Cooper manages, on all possible occasions, throughout his novels, to show the unlikeness of the Bay of Naples

to the Bay of New York—not the only point of resemblance, by the way, between the characters of the Missouri statesman and the New York novelist. Whether the subject under discussion was the taxation of bank-notes, or the abolition of slavery, made very little difference to Benton as to introducing an allusion to the salt monopoly. One of his happy arguments in favor of the repeal, which was addressed to an exceedingly practical and commonplace Congress, was that the early Christian disciples had been known as the salt of the earth—a Biblical metaphor, which Benton kindly assured his hearers was very expressive; and added that a salt tax was morally as well as politically wrong, and in fact "was a species of impiety."

But in attacking some of the abuses which had developed out of the tariff of 1833 Benton made a very shrewd and practical speech, without permitting himself to indulge in any such intellectual pranks as accompanied his salt orations. He especially aimed at reducing the drawbacks on sugar, molasses, and one or two other articles. In accordance with our whole clumsy, haphazard system of dealing with the tariff we had originally put very high duties on the articles in question, and then had allowed correspondingly heavy drawbacks; and yet, when in 1833, by Clay's famous compromise tariff bill, the duties were reduced to a fractional part of what they had previously been, no parallel reduction was made in the drawbacks, although Benton (supported by Webster) made a vain effort even then, while the compromise bill was on its passage, to have the injustice remedied. As a consequence, the exporters of sugar and rum, instead of drawing back the exact amounts paid into the Treasury, drew back several times as much; and the ridiculous

result was that certain exporters were paid a naked bounty out of the Treasury, and received pay for doing and suffering nothing. In 1839 the drawback paid on the exportation of refined sugar exceeded the amount of revenue derived from imported sugar by over twenty thousand dollars. Benton showed this clearly, by unimpeachable statistics, and went on to prove that in that year the whole amount of the revenue from brown and clayed sugar, plus the above-mentioned twenty thousand dollars, was paid over to twenty-nine sugar-refiners; and that these men thus "drew back" from the Treasury what they had never put into it. Abuses equally gross existed in relation to various other articles. But in spite of the clear justice of his case Benton was able at first to make but little impression on Congress; and it was some time before matters were straightened out, as all the protective interests felt obliged to make common cause with each other, no matter what evils might be perpetrated by their taking such action.

Toward the close of Van Buren's administration, when he was being assailed on every side, as well for what Jackson as for what he himself had done or left undone, one of the chief accusations brought against him was that he had squandered the public money, and that, since Adams had been ousted from the presidency, the expenses of running the government had increased out of all proportion to what was proper. There was good ground for their complaint, as the waste and peculation in some of the departments had been very great; but Benton, in an elaborate defense of both Jackson and Van Buren, succeeded in showing that at least certain of the accusations were unfounded—although he had to stretch a point or two in trying to make good his claim that the administration was really economical, being

reduced to the rather lame expedient of ruling out about two-thirds of the expenditures on the ground that they were "extraordinary."

The charge of extravagance was one of the least of the charges urged against the Jacksonian Democrats during the last days of their rule. While they had been in power the character of the public service had deteriorated frightfully, both as regarded its efficiency and infinitely more as regarded its honesty; and under Van Buren the amount of money stolen by the public officers, compared to the amount handed in to the Treasury, was greater than ever before or since. For this the Jacksonians were solely and absolutely responsible; they drove out the merit system of making appointments, and introduced the "spoils" system in its place; and under the latter they chose a peculiarly dishonest and incapable set of officers, whose sole recommendation was to be found in the knavish trickery and low cunning that enabled them to manage the ignorant voters who formed the backbone of Jackson's party. The statesmen of the Democracy in after-days forgot the good deeds of the Jacksonians; they lost their attachment to the Union, and abandoned their championship of hard money; but they never ceased to cling to the worst legacy their predecessors had left them. The engrafting of the "spoils" system on our government was, of all the results of Jacksonian rule, the one which was most permanent in its effects.

All these causes—the corruption of the public officials, the extravagance of the government, and the wide-spread distress, which might be regarded as the aftermath of its ruinous financial policy—combined with others that were as little to the discredit of the Jacksonians as they were to the credit of the Whigs,

brought about the overthrow of the former. There was much poetic justice in the fact that the presidential election which decided their fate was conducted on as purely irrational principles, and was as merely one of sound and fury, as had been the case in the election twelve years previously, when they came into power. The Whigs, having exhausted their language in denouncing their opponents for nominating a man like Andrew Jackson, proceeded to look about in their own party to find one who should come as near him as possible in all the attributes that had given him so deep a hold on the people; and they succeeded perfectly when they pitched on the old Indian fighter, Harrison. "Tippecanoe" proved quite as effective a war-cry in bringing about the downfall of the Jacksonians as "Old Hickory" had shown itself to be a dozen years previously in raising them up. General Harrison had already shown himself to be a good soldier, and a loyal and honest public servant, although by no means standing in the first rank either as regards war-craft or statecraft; but the mass of his supporters apparently considered the facts, or supposed facts, that he lived in a log cabin the walls of which were decorated with coon-skins, and that he drank hard cider from a gourd, as being more important than his capacity as a statesman or his past services to the nation.

The Whigs having thus taken a shaft from the Jacksonians' quiver, it was rather amusing to see the latter, in their turn, hold up their hands in horror at the iniquity of what would now be called a "hurrah" canvass; blandly ignoring the fact that it was simply a copy of their own successful proceedings. Says Benton, with amusing gravity, "The class of inducements addressed to the passions and imaginations of the people was such

as history blushes to record," a remark that provokes criticism, when it is remembered that Benton had been himself a prominent actor on the Jacksonian side in the campaigns of '28 and '32, when it was exclusively to "the passions and imaginations of the people" that all arguments were addressed.

The Democrats did not long remain out of power; and they kept the control of the governmental policy in their hands pretty steadily until the time of the Civil War; nevertheless it is true that with the defeat of Van Buren the Jacksonian Democracy, as such, lost forever its grip on the direction of national affairs. When, under Polk, the Democrats came back, they came under the lead of the very men whom the original Jacksonians had opposed and kept down. With all their faults, Jackson and Benton were strong Union men, and under them their party was a Union party. Calhoun and South Carolina, and the disunionists in the other Southern States were their bitter foes. But the disunion and extreme slavery elements within the Democratic ranks were increasing rapidly all the time; and they had obtained complete and final control when the party reappeared as victors after their defeat in 1840. Until Van Buren's overthrow the nationalists had held the upper hand in shaping Democratic policy; but after that event the leadership of the party passed completely into the hands of the separatists.

The defeat of Van Buren marks an era in more ways than one. During his administration slavery played a less prominent part in politics than did many other matters; this was never so again. His administration was the last in which this question, or the question springing from it, did not overtop and dwarf in importance all others. Again, the presidential election of 1840 was the

last into which slavery did not enter as a most important, and in fact as the vital and determining, factor. In the contest between Van Buren and Harrison it did not have the least influence upon the result. Moreover, Van Buren was the last Democratic President who ruled over a Union of States; all his successors, up to the time of Lincoln's election, merely held sway over a Union of sections. The spirit of separation had identified itself with the maintenance of slavery, and the South was rapidly uniting into a compact array of States with interests that were hostile to the North on the point most vitally affecting the welfare of the whole country.

No great question involving the existence of slavery was brought before the attention of Congress during Van Buren's term of office; nor was the matter mooted except in the eternal wrangles over receiving the abolitionist petitions. Benton kept silent in these discussions, although voting to receive the petitions. As he grew older he continually grew wiser, and better able to do good legislative work on all subjects; but he was not yet able to realize that the slavery question was one which could not be kept down, and which was bound to force itself into the sphere of national politics. He still insisted that it was only dragged before Congress by a few fanatics at the North, and that in the South it was made the instrument by which designing and unscrupulous men wished to break up the federal republic. His devotion to the Union, ever with him the chief and overmastering thought, made him regard with horror and aversion any man, at the North or at the South, who brought forward a question so fraught with peril to its continuance. He kept trying to delude himself into the belief that the discussion and the danger would alike gradually die away, and the former State of peaceful

harmony between the sections, and freedom from disunion excitement, would return.

But the time for such an ending already lay in the past; thereafter the outlook was to grow steadily darker year by year. Slavery lowered like a thunder-storm on the horizon; and though sometimes it might seem for a moment to break away, yet in reality it had reached that stage when, until the final all-engulfing outburst took place, the clouds were bound forevermore to return after the rain.

CHAPTER XI

THE PRESIDENT WITHOUT A PARTY

The Whigs in 1840 completely overthrew the Democrats, and for the first time elected a President and held the majority in both houses of Congress. Yet, as it turned out, all that they really accomplished was to elect a President without a party, for Harrison died when he had hardly more than sat in the presidential chair, and was succeeded by the Vice-President, Tyler, of Virginia.

Harrison was a true Whig; he was, when nominated, a prominent member of the Whig party, although of course not to be compared with its great leader, Henry Clay, or with its most mighty intellectual chief and champion in the Northeast, Daniel Webster, whose mutual rivalry had done much to make his nomination possible. Tyler, however, could hardly be called a Whig at all; on the contrary, he belonged rightfully in the ranks of those extreme Democrats who were farthest removed from the Whig standard, and who were as much displeased with the Union sentiments of the Jacksonians as they were with the personal tyranny of Jackson himself. He was properly nothing but a dissatisfied Democrat, who hated the Jacksonians, and had been nominated only because the Whig politicians wished to strengthen their ticket and insure its election by bidding for the votes of the discontented in the ranks of their foes. Now a chance stroke of death put the presidency in the hands of one who represented this, the smallest, element in the coalition that overthrew Van Buren.

The principles of the Whigs were hazily outlined at the best, and the party was never a very creditable organization; indeed, throughout its career, it could be most easily defined as the opposition to the Democracy. It was a free constructionist party, believing in giving a liberal interpretation to the doctrines of the Constitution; otherwise, its principles were purely economic, as it favored a high tariff, internal improvements, a bank, and kindred schemes; and its leaders, however they might quarrel among themselves, agreed thoroughly in their devout hatred of Jackson and all his works.

It was on this last point only that Tyler came in. His principles had originally been ultra-Democratic. He had been an extreme strict constructionist, had belonged to that wing of the Democracy which inclined more and more toward separation, and had thus, on several grounds, found himself opposed to Jackson, Benton, and their followers. Indeed, he went into opposition to his original party for reasons akin to those that influenced Calhoun; and Seward's famous remark about the "ill-starred coalition between Whigs and Nullifiers" might with certain changes have been applied to the presidential election of 1840 quite as well as to the senatorial struggles to which it had reference.

Tyler, however, had little else in common with Calhoun, and least of all his intellect. He has been called a mediocre man; but this is unwarranted flattery. He was a politician of monumental littleness. Owing to the nicely divided condition of parties, and to the sheer accident which threw him into a position of such prominence that it allowed him to hold the balance of power between them, he was enabled to turn politics completely topsyturvy; but his chief mental and moral at-

tributes were peevishness, fretful obstinacy, inconsistency, incapacity to make up his own mind, and the ability to quibble indefinitely over the most microscopic and hair-splitting plays upon words, together with an inordinate vanity that so blinded him to all outside feeling as to make him really think that he stood a chance to be renominated for the presidency.

The Whigs, especially in the Senate, under Henry Clay, prepared at once to push through various measures that should undo the work of the Jacksonians. Clay was boastfully and domineeringly sure of the necessity of applying to actual governmental work the economic theories that formed the chief stock in trade of his party. But it was precisely on these economic theories that Tyler split off from the Whigs. The result was that very shortly the real leader of the dominant party, backed by almost all his fellow party men in both houses of Congress, was at daggers drawn with the nominal Whig President, who in his turn was supported only by a "corporal's guard" of followers in the House of Representatives, by all the office-holders whom fear of removal reduced to obsequious subserviency, and by a knot of obscure politicians who used him for their own ends, and worked alternately on his vanity and on his fears. The Democrats, led by Benton, played out their own game, and were the only parties to the three-cornered fight who came out of it with profit. The details now offer rather dry reading, as the economic theories of all the contestants were more or less crude, the results of the conflict indecisive, and the effects upon our history ephemeral.

Clay began by a heated revival of one of Jackson's worst ideas, namely, that when the people elect a President they thereby mark with the seal of their approval

any and every measure with which that favored mortal or his advisers may consider themselves identified, and indorse all his and their previous actions. He at once declared that the people had shown, by the size of Harrison's majority, that they demanded the repeal of the independent Treasury Act, and the passage of various other laws in accordance with some of his own favorite hobbies, two out of three voters, as a matter of fact, probably never having given a second thought to any of them. Accordingly he proceeded to introduce a whole batch of bills, which he alleged that it was only yielding due respect to the spirit of Democracy to pass forthwith.

Benton, however, even outdid Clay in paying homage to what he was pleased to call the "Democratic idea." At this time he speaks of the last session of the Twenty-sixth Congress as being "barren of measures, and necessarily so, as being the last of an administration superseded by the popular voice and soon to expire; and therefore restricted by a sense of propriety, during the brief remainder of its existence, to the details of business and the routine of service." According to this theory an interregnum of some sixteen weeks would intervene between the terms of service of every two Presidents. He also speaks of Tyler as having, when the legislature of Virginia disapproved of a course he wished to follow, resigned his seat "in obedience to the Democratic principle," which, according to his views, thus completely nullified the section of the Constitution providing for a six years' term of service in the Senate. In truth Benton, like most other Jacksonian and Jeffersonian leaders, became both foolish and illogical when he began to talk of the bundle of vague abstractions, which he knew collectively as the "Democratic principle." Although not so bad as many of his school he

had yet gradually worked himself up to a belief that it was almost impious to pay anything but servile heed to the "will of the majority"; and was quite unconscious that to surrender one's own manhood and judgment to a belief in the divine right of kings was only one degree more ignoble, and was not a shadow more logical, and but little more defensible, than it was blindly to deify a majority—not of the whole people, but merely of a small fraction consisting of those who happened to be of a certain sex, to have reached a certain age, to belong to a certain race, and to fulfil some other conditions. In fact there is no natural or divine law in the matter at all; how large a portion of the population should be trusted with the control of the government is a question of expediency merely. In any purely native American community manhood suffrage works infinitely better than would any other system of government, and throughout our country at large, in spite of the large number of ignorant foreign-born or colored voters, it is probably preferable as it stands to any modification of it; but there is no more "natural right" why a white man over twenty-one should vote than there is why a negro woman under eighteen should not. "Civil rights" and "personal freedom" are not terms that necessarily imply the right to vote. People make mistakes when governing themselves, exactly as they make mistakes when governing others; all that can be said is, that in the former case their self-interest is on the side of good government, whereas in the latter it always may be, and often must be, the reverse; so that, when any people reaches a certain stage of mental development and of capacity to take care of its own concerns, it is far better that it should itself take the reins. The distinctive features of the American system are

its guarantees of personal independence and individual freedom; that is, as far as possible, it guarantees to each man his right to live as he chooses and to regulate his own private affairs as he wishes, without being interfered with or tyrannized over by an individual, or by an oligarchic minority, or by a Democratic majority; while, when the interests of the whole community are at stake, it is found best in the long run to let them be managed in accordance with the wishes of the majority of those presumably concerned.

Clay's flourish of trumpets foreboded trouble and disturbance to the Jacksonian camp. At last he stood at the head of a party controlling both branches of the legislative body, and devoted to his behests; and, if a little doubtful about the President, he still believed he could frighten him into doing as he was bid. He had long been in the minority, and had seen his foes ride roughshod over all he most believed in; and now he prepared to pay them back in their own coin and to leave a heavy balance on his side of the reckoning. Nor could any Jacksonian have shown himself more domineering and influenced by a more insolent disregard for the rights of others than Clay did in his hour of triumph. On the other side, Benton braced himself with dogged determination for the struggle; for he was one of those men who fight a losing or a winning battle with equal resolution.

Tyler's first message to Congress read like a pretty good Whig document. It did not display any especial signs of his former strict construction theories, and gave little hope to the Democrats. The leader of the latter, indeed, Benton, commented upon both it and its author with rather grandiloquent severity, on account of its latitudinarian bias, and of its recommendation of a

bank of some sort. However, the ink with which the message was written could hardly have been dry before the President's mind began to change. He himself probably had very little idea what he intended to do, and so contrived to give the Whigs the impression that he would act in accordance with their wishes; but the leaven had already begun working in his mind, and, not having much to work on, soon changed it so completely that he was willing practically to eat his own words.

Shortly after Tyler had sent in his message outlining what legislation he deemed proper, he being by virtue of his position the nominal and titular leader of the Whigs, Clay, who was their real and very positive chief, and who was, moreover, determined to assert his chieftainship, in his turn laid down a programme for his party to follow, introducing a series of resolutions declaring it necessary to pass a bill to repeal the Subtreasury Act, another to establish a bank, another to distribute the proceeds of the public land sales, and one or two more, to which was afterward added a bankruptcy measure.

The Subtreasury bill was first taken up and promptly passed and signed. Benton, of course, led the hopeless fight against it, making a long and elaborate speech, insisting that the finances were in excellent shape, as they were, showing the advantages of hard money, and denouncing the bill on account of the extreme suddenness with which it took effect, and because it made no provision for any substitute. He also alluded caustically to the curious and anomalous bank bill, which was then being patched up by the Whig leaders so as to get it into some such shape that the President would sign it.

The other three important measures, that is, the

bank, distribution, and bankruptcy bills, were all passed nearly together; as Benton pointed out, they were got through only by a species of bargain and sale, the chief supporters of each agreeing to support the other, so as to get their own pet measure through. "All must go together or fall together. This is the decree out-of-doors. When the sun dips below the horizon a private congress is held; the fate of the measures is decided; a bundle is tied together; and while one goes ahead as a bait, another is held back as a rod."

The bankruptcy bill went through and was signed. It was urged by all the large debtor class, whose ranks had been filled to overflowing by the years of wild speculation and general bank suspension and insolvency. These debtors were quite numerous enough to constitute an important factor in politics, but Benton disregarded them nevertheless, and fought the bill as stoutly as he did its companions, alleging that it was a gross outrage on honesty and on the rights of property, and was not a bankrupt law at all, but practically an insolvent law for the abolition of debts at the will of the debtor. He pointed out grave and numerous defects of detail, and gave an exhaustive abstract of bankruptcy legislation in general; the speech gave evidence of the tireless industry and wide range of learning for which Benton was pre-eminently distinguished.

The third bill to be taken up and passed was that providing for the distribution of the public lands revenue, and thus indirectly for assuming the debts of the States. Tyler, in his message, had characteristically stated that, though it would be wholly unconstitutional for the federal government to assume the debts of the States, yet it would be highly proper for it to give the latter money wherewith to pay them. Clay had al-

ways been an enthusiastic advocate of a distribution bill; and accordingly one was now passed and signed with the least possible delay. It was an absolutely indefensible measure. The Treasury was empty, and loan and tax bills were pending at the very moment, in order to supply money for the actual running of the government. As Benton pointed out, Congress had been called together (a special session having been summoned by Harrison before his death) to raise revenue, and the first thing done was to squander it. The distribution took place when the Treasury reports showed a deficit of sixteen millions of dollars. The bill was pushed through mainly by the States which had repudiated their debts in whole or in part; and as these debts were largely owed abroad, many prominent foreign banking-houses and individuals took an active part in lobbying for the bill. Benton was emphatically right in his opposition to the measure, but he was very wrong in some of the grounds he took. Thus he inveighed vigorously against the foreign capitalists who had come to help push the bill through Congress; but he did not have anything to say against the scoundrelly dishonesty displayed by certain States toward their creditors, which had forced these capitalists into the endeavor to protect themselves. He also incidentally condemned the original assumption by the national government of the debts of the States, at the time of the formation of the Constitution, which was an absolute necessity; and his constitutional views throughout seem rather strained. But he was right beyond cavil on the main point. It was criminal folly to give the States the impression that they would be allowed to create debts over which Congress could have no control, yet which Congress in the end would give them the money to pay.

To reward a State for repudiating a debt by giving her the wherewithal to pay it was a direct and unequivocal encouragement of dishonesty. In every respect the bill was wholly improper; and Benton's attitude toward it and toward similar schemes was incomparably better than the position of Clay, Webster, and the other Whigs.

Both the bankrupt bill and the distribution bill were repealed very shortly; the latter before it had time to take effect. This was an emphatic indorsement by the public of Benton's views, and a humiliating rebuke to the Whig authors of the measures. Indeed, the whole legislation of the session was almost absolutely fruitless in its results.

One feature of the struggle was an attempt by Clay, promptly and successfully resisted by Benton and Calhoun, to institute the hour limit for speeches in the Senate. There was a good deal of excuse for Clay's motion. The House could cut off debate by the previous question, which the Senate could not, and nevertheless had found it necessary to establish the hour limit in addition. Of course it is highly undesirable that there should not be proper freedom of debate in Congress; but it is quite as hurtful to allow a minority to exercise their privileges improperly. The previous question is often abused and used tyrannically; but on the whole it is a most invaluable aid to legislation. Benton, however, waxed hot and wrathful over the proposed change in the Senate rules. He, with Calhoun and their followers, had been consuming an immense amount of time in speech-making against the Whig measures, and in offering amendments; not with any hopes of bettering the bills, but for outside effect, and to annoy their opponents. He gives an amusingly naïve account of their

course of action, and the reasons for it, substantially as follows:

"The Democratic senators acted upon a system, and with a thorough organization and a perfect understanding. Being a minority, and able to do nothing, they became assailants, and attacked incessantly; not by formal orations against the whole body of a measure, but by sudden, short, and pungent speeches directed against the vulnerable parts, and pointed by proffered amendments. Amendments were continually offered—a great number being prepared every night and placed in suitable hands for use the next day—always commendably calculated to expose an evil and to present a remedy. Near forty propositions of amendment were offered to the first fiscal agent bill alone—the yeas and nays were taken upon them seven and thirty times. All the other prominent bills—distribution, bankrupt, fiscal corporation, new tariff act, called revenue—were served the same way; every proposed amendment made an issue. There were but twenty-two of us, but every one was a speaker and effective. The *Globe* newspaper was a powerful ally, setting out all we did to the best advantage in strong editorials, and carrying out our speeches, fresh and hot, to the people; and we felt victorious in the midst of unbroken defeats."

It is no wonder that such rank filibustering, coupled with the exasperating self-complacency of its originators, should have excited in Whig bosoms every desperate emotion short of homicidal mania.

Clay, to cut off such useless talk, gave notice that he would move to have the time for debate for each individual restricted; remarking very truthfully that he did not believe the people at large would complain of the abridgment of speeches in Congress. But the Demo-

cratic senators, all rather fond of windy orations, fairly foamed at the mouth at what they affected to deem such an infringement of their liberties; and actually took the inexcusable resolution of bidding defiance to the rule if it was adopted, and refusing to obey it, no matter what degree of violence their conduct might bring about—a resolution that was wholly unpardonable. Benton was selected to voice their views upon the matter, which he did in a long, and not very wise, speech; while Calhoun was quite as emphatic in his threats of what would happen if attempt should be made to enforce the proposed rule. Clay was always much bolder in opening a campaign than in carrying it through; and when it came to putting his words into deeds, he wholly lacked the nerve which would have enabled him to contend with two such men as the senators from Missouri and South Carolina. Had he possessed a temperament like that of either of his opponents, he would have gone on and have simply forced acquiescence; for any legislative body can certainly enforce what rules it may choose to make as to the conduct of its own members in addressing it; but his courage failed him, and he withdrew from the contest, leaving the victory with the Democrats.

When the question of the recharter of the district banks came up, it of course gave Benton another chance to attack his favorite foe. He offered a very proper amendment, which was voted down, to prohibit the banks from issuing a currency of small notes, fixing upon twenty dollars as being the lowest limit. This he supported in a strong speech, wherein he once again argued at length in favor of a gold and silver currency, and showed the evil effects of small bank-notes, which might not be, and often were not, redeemable at par.

He very properly pointed out that to have a sound currency, especially in all the smaller denominations, was really of greater interest to the working men than to any one else.

The great measure of the session, however, and the one that was intended to be the final crown and glory of the Whig triumph, was the bill to establish a new national bank. Among the political theories to which Clay clung most closely, only the belief in a bank ranked higher in his estimation than his devotion to a protective tariff. The establishment of a national bank seemed to him to be the chief object of a Whig success; and that it would work immediate and immense benefit to the country was with him an article of faith. With both houses of Congress under his control, he at once prepared to push his pet measure through, impatiently brushing aside all resistance.

But at the very outset difficulty was feared from the action of the President. Tyler could not at first make up his mind what to do; or rather, he made it up in half a dozen different ways every day. His peevishness, vacillation, ambitious vanity, and sheer puzzleheadedness made him incline first to the side of his new friends and present supporters, the Whigs, and then to that of his old Democratic allies, whose views on the bank, as on most other questions, he had so often openly expressed himself as sharing. But though his mind oscillated like a pendulum, yet each time it swung farther and farther over to the side of the Democracy, and it began to look as if he would certainly in the end come to a halt in the camp of the enemies of the Whigs; his approach to this destination was merely hastened by Clay's overbearing violence and injudicious taunts.

However, at first Tyler did not dare to come out

openly against any and all bank laws, but tried to search round for some compromise measure; and as he could not invent a compromise in fact, he came to the conclusion that one in words would do just as well. He said that his conscience would not permit him to sign a bill to establish a bank that was called a bank, but that he was willing to sign a bill establishing such an institution provided that it was called something else, though it should possess all the properties of a bank. Such a proposal opened a wide field for the endless quibbling in which his soul delighted.

The secretary of the treasury, in response to a call from the Senate, furnished a plan for a bank, having modelled it studiously so as to overcome the President's scruples; and a select committee of the Senate at once shaped a bill in accordance with the plans. Said Benton: "Even the title was made ridiculous to please the President, though not so much so as he wished. He objected to the name of bank either in the title or the body of the charter, and proposed to style it 'Fiscal Institute'; and afterward the 'Fiscal Agent,' and finally the 'Fiscal Corporation.'" Such preposterous folly on the President's part was more than the hot-blooded and overbearing Kentuckian could stand; and, in spite of his absorbing desire for the success of his measure, and of the vital necessity for conciliating Tyler, Clay could not bring himself to adopt such a ludicrous title, even though he had seen that the charter provided that the institution, whatever it might be styled in form, should in fact have all the properties of a bank. After a while, however, a compromise title was agreed on, but only a shadow less imbecile than the original one proposed by the President; and it was agreed to call the measure the "Fiscal Bank" bill.

The President vetoed it, but stated that he was ready to approve any similar bill that should be free from the objections he named. Clay could not resist reading Tyler a lecture on his misconduct, during the course of a speech in the Senate; but the Whigs generally smothered their resentment, and set about preparing something which the President would sign, and this time concluded that they would humor him to the top of his bent, even by choosing a title as ridiculous as he wished; so they styled their bill one to establish a "Fiscal Corporation." Benton held the title up to well-deserved derision, and showed that, though there had been quite an elaborate effort to disguise the form of the measure, and to make it purport to establish a bank that should have the properties of a treasury, yet that in reality it was simply a revival of the old scheme under another name. The Whigs swallowed the sneers of their opponents as best they could, and passed their bill.

The President again interposed his veto. An intrigue was going on among a few unimportant congressmen and obscure office-holders to form a new party with Tyler at its head; and the latter willingly entered into the plan, his mind, which was not robust at the best, being completely dazzled by his sudden elevation and his wild hopes that he could continue to keep the place which he had reached. He had given the Whigs reason to expect that he would sign the bill, and had taken none of his Cabinet into his confidence. So, when his veto came in, it raised a perfect whirlwind of wrath and bitter disappointment. His Cabinet all resigned, except Webster, who stayed to finish the treaty with Great Britain; and the Whigs formally read him out of the party. The Democrats looked on with huge enjoyment, and patted Tyler on the back, for they could see that he was bring-

ing their foes to ruin; but nevertheless they despised him heartily, and abandoned him wholly when he had served their turn. Left without any support among the regulars of either side, and his own proposed third party turning out a still-born abortion, he simply played out his puny part until his term ended, and then dropped noiselessly out of sight. It is only the position he filled, and not in the least his ability, for either good or bad, in filling it, that prevents his name from sinking into merciful oblivion.

There was yet one more brief spasm over the bank, however; the President sending in a plan for a "Fiscal Agent," to be called a Board of Exchequer. Congress contemptuously refused to pay any attention to the proposition, Benton showing its utter unworthiness in an excellent speech, one of the best that he made on the whole financial question.

Largely owing to the cross purposes at which the President and his party were working, the condition of the Treasury became very bad. It sought to provide for its immediate wants by the issue of Treasury notes, differing from former notes of the kind in that they were made reissuable. Benton at once, and very properly, attacked this proceeding. He had a check drawn for a few days' compensation as senator, demanded payment in hard money, and when he was given Treasury notes instead, made a most emphatic protest in the Senate, which was entirely effectual, the practically compulsory tender of the paper money being forthwith stopped.

It was at this time, also, that bills to subsidize steamship lines were first passed, and that the enlarging and abuse of the pension system began, which in our own day threatens to become a really crying evil. Benton

opposed both sets of measures; and in regard to the pension matter showed that he would not let himself, by any specious plea of exceptional suffering or need for charity, be led into vicious special legislation, sure in the end to bring about the breaking down of some of the most important principles of government.

CHAPTER XII

BOUNDARY TROUBLES WITH ENGLAND

Two important controversies with foreign powers became prominent during Tyler's presidency; but he had little to do with the settlement of either, beyond successively placing in his Cabinet the two great statesmen who dealt with them. Webster, while secretary of state, brought certain of the negotiations with England to a close; and later on, Calhoun, while holding the same office, took up Webster's work and also grappled with—indeed partly caused—the troubles on the Mexican border, and turned them to the advantage of the South and slavery.

Our boundaries were still very ill defined, except where they were formed by the Gulf and the Ocean, the Great Lakes, and the river St. John. Even in the Northeast, where huge stretches of unbroken forest-land separated the inhabited portions of Canada from those of New England, it was not yet decided how much of this wilderness belonged to us and how much to the Canadians; and in the vast, unsettled regions of the far West our claims came into direct conflict with those of Mexico and of Great Britain. The ownership of these little known and badly mapped regions could with great difficulty be decided on grounds of absolute and abstract right; the title of each contestant to the land was more or less plausible, and at the same time more or less defective. The matter was sure to be decided in favor of the strongest; and, say what we will about the justice and right of the various claims, the honest truth is, that the comparative might of the different nations, and not

the comparative righteousness of their several causes, was the determining factor in the settlement. Mexico lost her northern provinces by no law of right, but simply by the law of the longest sword—the same law that gave India to England. In both instances the result was greatly to the benefit of the conquered peoples and of every one else; though there is this wide difference between the two cases: that whereas the English rule in India, while it may last for decades or even for centuries, must eventually come to an end and leave little trace of its existence; on the other hand our conquests from Mexico determined for all time the blood, speech, and law of the men who should fill the lands we won.

The questions between Great Britain and ourselves were compromised by each side accepting about half what it claimed, only because neither was willing to push the other to extremities. Englishmen like Palmerston might hector and ruffle, and Americans like Benton might swagger and bully; but when it came to be a question of actual fighting each people recognized the power of the other, and preferred to follow the more cautious and peaceful, not to say timid, lead of such statesmen as Webster and Lord Melbourne. Had we been no stronger than the Sikhs, Oregon and Washington would at present be British possessions; and if Great Britain had been as weak as Mexico, she would not now hold a foot of territory on the Pacific coast. Either nation might perhaps have refused to commit a gross and entirely unprovoked and uncalled-for act of aggression; but each, under altered conditions, would have readily found excuses for showing much less regard for the claims of the other than actually was shown. It would be untrue to say that nations have not at times proved themselves capable of acting with great disinterested-

ness and generosity toward other peoples; but such conduct is not very common at the best, and although it often may be desirable, it certainly is not always so. If the matter in dispute is of great importance, and if there is a doubt as to which side is right, then the strongest party to the controversy is pretty sure to give itself the benefit of that doubt; and international morality will have to take tremendous strides in advance before this ceases to be the case.

It is difficult to exaggerate the importance of the treaties and wars by means of which we finally gave definite bounds to our territory beyond the Mississippi. Contemporary political writers and students, of the lesser sort, are always painfully deficient in the sense of historic perspective; and to such the struggles for the possession of the unknown and dimly outlined Western wastes seemed of small consequence compared to similar European contests for territorial aggrandizement. Yet, in reality, when we look at the far-reaching nature of the results, the questions as to what kingdom should receive the fealty of Holstein or Lorraine, of Savoy or the Dobrudscha, seem of absolutely trivial importance compared to the infinitely more momentous ones as to the future race settlement and national ownership of the then lonely and unpeopled lands of Texas, California, and Oregon.

Benton, greatly to the credit of his foresight, and largely in consequence of his strong nationalist feeling, thoroughly appreciated the importance of our geographical extensions. He was the great champion of the West and of Western development, and a furious partisan of every movement in the direction of the enlargement of our Western boundaries. Many of his expressions, when talking of the greatness of our country and of

the magnitude of the interests which were being decided, not only were grandiloquent in manner, but also seem exaggerated and overwrought even as regards matter. But when we think of the interests for which he contended, as they were to become, and not as they at the moment were, the appearance of exaggeration is lost, and the intense feeling of his speeches no longer seems out of place or disproportionate to the importance of the subject with which he dealt. Without clearly formulating his opinions, even to himself, and while sometimes prone to attribute to his country at the moment a greatness she was not to possess for two or three generations to come, he, nevertheless, had engrained in his very marrow and fibre the knowledge that inevitably, and beyond all doubt, the coming years were to be hers. He knew that, while other nations held the past, and shared with his own the present, yet that to her belonged the still formless and unshaped future. More clearly than almost any other statesman he beheld the grandeur of the nation loom up, vast and shadowy, through the advancing years.

He was keenly alive to the need of our having free chance to spread toward the northwest; he very early grasped the idea that in that direction we ought to have room for continental development. In his earliest years, to be sure, when the Mississippi seemed a river of the remote Western border, when nobody, not even the hardiest trapper, had penetrated the boundless and treeless plains that stretch to the foot-hills of the Rockies, and when the boldest thinkers had not dared to suppose that we could ever hold together as a people, when once scattered over so wide a territory, he had stated in a public speech that he considered the mountains to be our natural frontier line to the west, and the barrier be-

yond which we ought not to pass, and had expressed his trust that on the Pacific coast there would grow up a kindred and friendly Republic. But very soon, as the seemingly impossible became the actual, he himself changed, and ever afterward held that we should have, wherever possible, no boundaries but the two oceans.

Benton's violent and aggressive patriotism undoubtedly led him to assume positions toward foreign powers that were very repugnant to the quiet, peaceable, and order-loving portion of the community, especially when he gave vent to the spirit of jealous antagonism which he felt toward Great Britain, the power that held sway over the wilderness bordering us on the north. Yet the arrogant attitude he assumed was more than justified by the destiny of the great Republic; and it would have been well for all America if we had insisted even more than we did upon the extension northward of our boundaries. Not only the Columbia but also the Red River of the North—and the Saskatchewan and Frazer as well—should lie wholly within our limits, less for our own sake than for the sake of the men who dwell along their banks. Columbia, Saskatchewan, and Manitoba would, as States of the American Union, hold positions incomparably more important, grander, and more dignified than they can ever hope to reach either as independent communities or as provincial dependencies of a foreign power that regards them with a kindly tolerance somewhat akin to contemptuous indifference. Of course no one would wish to see these, or any other settled communities, now added to our domain by force; we want no unwilling citizens to enter our Union; the time to have taken the lands was before settlers came into them. European nations war for the possession of thickly settled districts which, if conquered, will for centuries re-

main alien and hostile to the conquerors; we, wiser in our generation, have seized the waste solitudes that lay near us, the limitless forests and never-ending plains, and the valleys of the great, lonely rivers; and have thrust our own sons into them to take possession; and a score of years after each conquest we see the conquered land teeming with a people that is one with ourselves.

Benton felt that all the unoccupied land to the northwest was by right our heritage, and he was willing to do battle for it if necessary. He was a perfect type of Western American statesmanship in his way of looking at our foreign relations; he was always unwilling to compromise, being of that happy temperament which is absolutely certain that its claims are just and righteous in their entirety, and that it would be wrong to accept anything less than all that is demanded; he was willing to bully if our rights, as he deemed them, were not granted us; and he was perfectly ready to fight if the bullying was unsuccessful. True, he did not consistently carry through all his theories to their logical consequences; but it may well be questioned whether, after all, his original attitude toward Great Britain was not wiser, looking to its probable remote results, than that which was finally taken by the national government, whose policy was on this point largely shaped by the feeling among the richer and more educated classes of the Northeast. These classes have always been more cautious and timid than any others in the Union, especially in their way of looking at possible foreign wars, and have never felt much of the spirit which made the West stretch out impatiently for new lands. Fortunately they have rarely been able to control our territorial growth.

No foot of soil to which we had any title in the Northwest should have been given up; we were the people who could use it best, and we ought to have taken it all. The prize was well worth winning, and would warrant a good deal of risk being run. We had even then grown to be so strong that we were almost sure eventually to win in any American contest for continental supremacy. We were near by, our foes far away—for the contest over the Columbia would have been settled in Canada. We should have had hard fighting, to be sure, but sooner or later the result would have been in our favor. There were no better soldiers in the world than the men of Balaclava and Inkerman, but the victors of Buena Vista and Chapultepec were as good. Scott and Taylor were not great generals, but they were, at least, the equals of Lord Raglan; and we did not have in our service any such examples of abnormal military inaptitude as Lords Lucan and Cardigan and their kind.

It was of course to be expected that men like Benton would bitterly oppose the famous Ashburton treaty, which was Webster's crowning work while secretary of state, and the only conspicuous success of Tyler's administration. The Ashburton treaty was essentially a compromise between the extreme claims of the two contestants, as was natural where the claims were based on very unsubstantial grounds and the contestants were of somewhat the same strength. It was most beneficial in its immediate effects; and that it was a perfectly dignified and proper treaty for America to make is best proved by the virulent hostility with which Palmerston and his followers assailed it as a "surrender" on the part of England, while Englishmen of the same stamp are to this day never tired of lamenting the fact that

they have allowed our Western boundaries to be pushed so far to the north. But there appears to be much excuse for Benton's attitude, when we look at the treaty as one in a chain of incidents, and with regard to its future results. Our territorial quarrels with Great Britain were not like those between most other powers. It was for the interest of the whole western hemisphere that no European nation should have extensive possessions between the Atlantic and the Pacific; and by right we should have given ourselves the benefit of every doubt in all territorial questions, and have shown ourselves ready to make prompt appeal to the sword whenever it became necessary as a last resort.

Still, as regards the Ashburton treaty itself, it must be admitted that much of Benton's opposition was merely factious and partisan, on account of its being a Whig measure; and his speeches on the subject contain a number of arguments that are not very creditable to him.

Some of his remarks referred to a matter which had been already a cause of great excitement during Van Buren's administration, and on which he had spoken more than once. This was the destruction of the steamer *Caroline* by the British during the abortive Canadian insurrection of 1837. Much sympathy had been felt for the rebels by the Americans along the border, and some of them had employed the *Caroline* in conveying stores to the insurgents; and in revenge a party of British troops surprised and destroyed her one night while she was lying in an American port. This was a gross and flagrant violation of our rights, and was promptly resented by Van Buren, who had done what he could to maintain order along the border, and had been successful in his efforts. Benton had supported

the President in preventing a breach of neutrality on our part, and was fiercely indignant when the breach was committed by the other side. Reparation was demanded forthwith. The British Government at first made evasive replies. After a while a very foolish personage named McLeod, a British subject, who boasted that he had taken part in the affair, ventured into New York and was promptly imprisoned by the State authorities. His boastings, fortunately for him, proved to be totally unfounded, and he was acquitted by the jury before whom he was taken, after a detention of several months in prison. But meanwhile the British Government demanded his release—adopting a very different tone with Tyler and the Whigs from that which they had been using toward Van Buren, who still could conjure with Jackson's terrible name. The United States agreed to release McLeod, but New York refused to deliver him up; and before the question was decided he was acquitted, as said above. It was clearly wrong for a State to interfere in a disagreement between the nation and a foreign power; and on the other hand the federal authorities did not show as much firmness in their dealings with England as they should have shown. Benton, true to certain of his States'-rights theories and in pursuance of his policy of antagonism to Great Britain, warmly supported the attitude of New York, alleging that the United States had no right to interfere with her disposal of McLeod; and asserting that while if the citizens of one country committed an outrage upon another it was necessary to apply to the sovereign for redress, yet that if the wrong-doers came into the country which had been aggrieved they might be seized and punished; and he exultingly referred to Jackson's conduct at the time of the first Seminole War,

when he hung offhand two British subjects whom he accused of inciting the Indians against us, Great Britain not making any protest. The *Caroline* matter was finally settled in the Ashburton treaty, the British making a formal but very guarded apology for her destruction—an apology which did not satisfy Benton in the least.

It is little to Benton's credit, however, that, while thus courting foreign wars, he yet opposed the efforts of the Whigs to give us a better navy. Our navy was then good of its kind, but altogether too small. Benton's opposition to its increase seems to have proceeded partly from mere bitter partisanship, partly from sheer ignorance, and partly from the doctrinaire dread of any kind of standing military or naval force, which he had inherited, with a good many similar ideas, from the Jeffersonians.

He attacked the whole treaty, article by article, when it came up for ratification in the Senate, making an extremely lengthy and elaborate speech, or rather set of speeches, against it. Much of his objection, especially to the part compromising the territorial claims of the two governments, was well founded; but much was also factious and groundless. The most important point of all that was in controversy, the ownership of Oregon, was left unsettled; but, as will be shown further on, this was wise. He made this omission a base or pretext for the charge that the treaty was gotten up in the interests of the East—although with frank lack of logic he also opposed it because it sacrificed the interests of Maine—and that it was detrimental to the South and West; and he did his best to excite sectional feeling against it. He also protested against the omission of all reference to the impressment of American sailors by British vessels;

and this was a valid ground of opposition—although Webster had really settled the matter by writing a formal note to the British Government, in which he practically gave official notice that any attempt to revive the practice would be repelled by force of arms.

Benton occupied a much less tenable position when he came to the question of slavery, and inveighed against the treaty because it did not provide for the return of fugitive slaves, or of slaves taken from American coasting vessels when the latter happened to be obliged to put into West Indian ports, and because it did contain a provision that we ourselves should keep in commission a squadron on the coast of Africa to co-operate with the British in the suppression of the slave-trade. Benton's object in attacking the treaty on this point was to excite the South to a degree that would make the senators from that section refuse to join in ratifying it; but the attempt was a flat failure. It is hardly to be supposed that he himself was as indignant over this question as he pretended to be. He must have realized that, so long as we had among ourselves an institution so wholly barbarous and out of date as slavery, just so long we should have to expect foreign powers to treat us rather cavalierly on that one point. Whatever we might say among ourselves as to the rights of property or the necessity of preserving the Union by refraining from the disturbance of slavery, it was certain that foreign nations would place the manhood and liberty of the slave above the vested interest of the master—all the more readily because they were jealous of the Union and anxious to see it break up, and were naturally delighted to take the side of abstract justice and humanity, when to do so was at the expense of outsiders and redounded to their own credit, without causing them the

least pecuniary loss or personal inconvenience. The attitude of slaveholders toward freedom in the abstract was grotesque in its lack of logic; but the attitude of many other classes of men, both abroad and at home, toward it was equally full of a grimly unconscious humor. The Southern planters, who loudly sympathized with Kossuth and the Hungarians, were entirely unconscious that their tyranny over their own black bondsmen made their attacks upon Austria's despotism absurd; and Germans, who were shocked at our holding the blacks in slavery, could not think of freedom in their own country without a shudder. On one night the Democrats of the Northern States would hold a mass-meeting to further the cause of Irish freedom, on the next night the same men would break up another meeting held to help along the freeing of the negroes; while the English aristocracy held up its hands in horror at American slavery and set its face like a flint against all efforts to do Ireland tardy and incomplete justice.

Again, in his opposition to the extradition clause of the treaty, Benton was certainly wrong. Nothing is clearer than that nations ought to combine to prevent criminals from escaping punishment merely by fleeing over an imaginary line; the crime is against all society, and society should unite to punish it. Especially is there need of the most stringent extradition laws between countries whose people have the same speech and legal system, as with the United States and Great Britain. Indeed, it is a pity that our extradition laws are not more stringent. But Benton saw, or affected to see, in the extradition clause, a menace to political refugees, and based his opposition to it mainly on this ground. He also quoted on his side the inevitable Jefferson; for Jefferson, or rather the highly idealized conception of

what Jefferson had been, shared with the "demos krateo principle" the honor of being one of the twin fetiches to which Benton, in common with most of his fellow Democrats, especially delighted to bow down.

But when he came to the parts of the treaty that defined our northeastern boundary and so much of our northwestern boundary as lay near the Great Lakes, Benton occupied far more defensible ground; and the parts of his speech referring to these questions were very strong indeed. He attempted to show that in the matter of the Maine frontier we had surrendered very much more than there was any need of our doing, and that the British claim was unfounded; and there seems now to be good reason for thinking him right, although it must be admitted that in agreeing to the original line in earlier treaties the British had acted entirely under a misapprehension as to where it would go. Benton was also able to make a good point against Webster for finally agreeing to surrender so much of Maine's claim by showing the opposition the latter had made, while in the Senate, to a similar but less objectionable clause in a treaty which Jackson's administration had then been trying to get through. Again Webster had, in defending the surrender of certain of our claims along the boundary west of Lake Superior, stated that the country was not very valuable, as it was useless for agricultural purposes; and Benton had taken him up sharply on this point, saying that we wanted the land anyhow, whether it produced corn and potatoes or only furs and lumber. The amounts of territory as to which our claims were compromised were not very large compared to the extent of the Pacific coast lands which were still left in dispute; and it was perhaps well that the treaty was ratified; but certainly there is much to be said on

Benton's side so far as his opposition to the proposed frontier was concerned.

However, he was only able to rally eight other senators to his support, and the treaty went through the Senate triumphantly. It encountered an even more bitter opposition in Parliament, where Palmerston headed a series of furious attacks upon it, for reasons the precise opposite of those which Benton alleged, arguing that England received much less, instead of much more, than her due, and thereby showing Webster's position in a very much better light than that in which it would otherwise have appeared. Eventually the British Government ratified the treaty.

The Ashburton treaty did not touch on the Oregon matter at all; nor was this dealt with by Webster while he was secretary of state. But it came before the Senate at that time, and later on Calhoun took it up, when filling Webster's place in the Cabinet, although a final decision was not reached until during Polk's presidency. Webster did not appreciate the importance of Oregon in the least, and moreover came from a section of the country that was not inclined to insist on territorial expansion at the hazard of a war, in which the merchants of the seaboard would be the chief sufferers. Calhoun, it is true, came from a peculiarly militant and bellicose State, but on the other hand from a section that was not very anxious to see the free North acquire new territory. So it happened that neither of Tyler's two great secretaries felt called upon to insist too vehemently upon going to extremes in defense of our rights, or supposed rights, along the Pacific coast; and though in the end the balance was struck pretty evenly between our claims and those of our neighbor, yet it is to be regretted that we did not stand out stiffly for the whole

of our demand. Our title was certainly not perfect, but it was to the full as good as, or better than, Great Britain's; and it would have been better in the end had we insisted upon the whole territory being given to us, no matter what price we had to pay.

The politico-social line of division between the East and the West had been gradually growing fainter as that between the North and South grew deeper; but on the Oregon question it again became prominent. Southeastern Democrats, like the Carolinian McDuffie, spoke as slightingly of the value of Oregon, and were as little inclined to risk a war for its possession, as the most peace-loving Whigs of New England; while the intense Western feeling against giving up any of our rights on the Pacific coast was best expressed by the two senators from the slave State of Missouri. Benton was not restrained in his desire to add to the might of the Union by any fear of the possible future effect upon the political power of the slave States. Although a slaveholder and the representative of slaveholders, he was fully alive to the evils of slavery, though as yet not seeing clearly how all-important a question it had become. The preservation and extension of the Union and obedience to the spirit of Democracy were the chief articles of his political creed, and to these he always subordinated all others. When, in speaking of slavery, he made use, as he sometimes did, of expressions that were not far removed from those of men really devoted to the slave interests, it was almost always because he had some ulterior object in view, or for factional ends; for unfortunately his standard of political propriety was not sufficiently high to prevent his trying to make use of any weapon, good or bad, with which to overturn his political foes. In protesting against the Ashburton treaty,

he outdid even such slavery champions as Calhoun in the extravagance of his ideas as to what we should demand of foreign powers in reference to their treatment of our "peculiar institution"; but he seems to have done this merely because thereby he got an additional handle of attack against the Whig measures. The same thing was true earlier of his fulmination against Clay's proposed Panama Congress; and even before that, in attacking Adams for his supposed part in the treaty whereby we established the line of our Spanish frontier, he dragged slavery into the question, not, apparently, because he really particularly wished to see our slave territory extended, but because he thought that he might use the slavery cry to excite in one other section of the country a feeling as strong as that which the West already felt in regard to territorial expansion generally. Indeed, his whole conduct throughout the Oregon controversy, especially when taken in connection with the fact that he stood out for Maine's frontier rights more stoutly than the Maine representatives themselves, shows how free from sectional bias was his way of looking at our geographical growth.

The territory along the Pacific coast lying between California on the south and Alaska on the north—"Oregon," as it was comprehensively called—had been a source of dispute for some time between the United States and Great Britain. After some negotiations both had agreed with Russia to recognize the line of 54° 40′ as the southern boundary of the latter's possessions; and Mexico's undisputed possession of California gave an equally well-marked southern limit, at the forty-second parallel. All between was in dispute. The British had trading-posts at the mouth of the Columbia, which they emphatically asserted to be theirs; we, on

the other hand, claimed an absolutely clear title up to the forty-ninth parallel, a couple of hundred miles north of the mouth of the Columbia, and asserted that for all the balance of the territory up to the Russian possessions our title was at any rate better than that of the British. In 1818 a treaty had been made providing for the joint occupation of the territory by the two powers, as neither was willing to give up its claim to the whole, or at the time at all understood the value of the possession, then entirely unpeopled. This treaty of joint occupancy had remained in force ever since. Under it the British had built great trading stations, and used the whole country in the interests of certain fur companies. The Americans, in spite of some vain efforts, were unable to compete with them in this line; but, what was infinitely more important, had begun, even prior to 1840, to establish actual settlers along the banks of the rivers, some missionaries being the first to come in. As long, however, as the territory remained sparsely settled, and the communication with it chiefly by sea, the hold of Great Britain gave promise of being the stronger. But the aspect of affairs was totally changed when in 1842 a huge caravan of over a thousand Americans made the journey overland from the frontiers of Missouri, taking with them their wives and their children, their flocks and herds, carrying their long rifles on their shoulders, and their axes and spades in the great canvas-topped wagons. The next year, two thousand more settlers of the same sort in their turn crossed the vast plains, wound their way among the Rocky Mountains through the pass explored by Fremont, Benton's son-in-law, and after suffering every kind of hardship and danger, and warding off the attacks of hostile Indians, descended the western slope of the great watershed to join their fellows

by the banks of the Columbia. When American settlers were once in actual possession of the disputed territory, it became evident that the period of Great Britain's undisputed sway was over.

The government of the United States, meanwhile, was so far from helping these settlers that it on the contrary rather threw obstacles in their way. As usual with us, the individual activity of the citizens themselves, who all acted independently and with that peculiar self-reliance that is the chief American characteristic, outstripped the activity of their representatives, who were obliged all to act together, and who were therefore held back by each other—our Constitution, while giving free scope for individual freedom, wisely providing such checks as to make our governmental system eminently conservative in its workings. Tyler's administration did not wish to embroil itself with England; so it refused any aid to the settlers, and declined to give them grants of land, as under the joint occupancy treaty that would have given England offense and cause for complaint. But Benton and the other Westerners were perfectly willing to offend England, if by so doing they could help America to obtain Oregon, and were too rash and headstrong to count the cost of their actions. Accordingly, a bill was introduced providing for the settlement of Oregon, and giving each settler six hundred and forty acres, and additional land if he had a family; so that every inducement was held out to the emigrants, the West wanting to protect and encourage them by all the means in its power. The laws and jurisdiction of the Territory of Iowa were to be extended to all the settlers on the Pacific coast, who hitherto had governed themselves merely by a system of mutual agreements.

The bill was, of course, strongly opposed, especially on account of the clause giving land to the settlers. It passed the Senate by a close vote, but failed in the House. Naturally Benton was one of its chief supporters, and spoke at length in its favor. He seized the kernel of the matter when, in advocating the granting of land, he spoke of immigration as "the only thing which can save the country from the British, acting through their powerful agent, the Hudson's Bay Company." He then blew a lusty note of defiance to Great Britain herself:

"I think she will take offense, do what we may in relation to this territory. She wants it herself, and means to quarrel for it, if she does not fight for it. . . . I grant that she will take offense, but that is not the question with me. Has she a *right* to take offense? That is my question! And this being decided in the negative, I neither fear nor calculate consequences. . . . Courage will keep her off, fear will bring her upon us. The assertion of our rights will command her respect; the fear to assert them will bring us her contempt. . . . Neither nations nor individuals ever escaped danger by fearing it. They must face it and defy it. An abandonment of a right for fear of bringing on an attack, instead of keeping it off, will inevitably bring on the outrage that is dreaded."

He was right enough in his disposition to resent the hectoring spirit which, at that time, characterized Great Britain's foreign policy; but he was all wrong in condemning delay, and stating that if things were left as they were time would work against us, and not for us.

In this respect Calhoun, who opposed the bill, was much wiser. He advocated a policy of "masterly inactivity," foreseeing that time was everything to us, in-

asmuch as the land was sure in the end to belong to that nation whose people had settled in it, and we alone were able to furnish a constantly increasing stream of immigrants. Later on, however, Calhoun abandoned this policy, probably mainly influenced by fear of the extension of free territory, and consented to a compromise with Great Britain. The true course to have pursued would have been to have combined the ideas of both Benton and Calhoun, and to have gone farther than either; that is, we should have allowed the question to remain unsettled as long as was possible, because every year saw an increasing American population in the coveted lands, and rendered the ultimate decision surer to be for us. When it was impossible to postpone the question longer, we should have insisted upon its being settled entirely in our favor, no matter at what cost. The unsuccessful attempts, made by Benton and his supporters, to persuade the Senate to pass a resolution, requiring that notice of the termination of the joint occupancy treaty should forthwith be given, were certainly ill advised.

However, even Benton was not willing to go to the length to which certain Western men went, who insisted upon all or nothing. He had become alarmed and angry over the intrigue for the admission of Texas and the proposed forcible taking away of Mexican territory. The northwestern Democrats wanted all Texas and all Oregon; the southeastern ones wished all the former and part of the latter. Benton then concluded that it would be best to take part of each; for, although no friend to compromises, yet he was unwilling to jeopardize the safety of the Union as it was by seeking to make it still larger. Accordingly, he sympathized with the effort made by Calhoun while secretary of state to

get the British to accept the line of 49° as the frontier; but the British Government then rejected this proposition. In 1844 the Democrats made their campaign upon the issue of "fifty-four forty or fight"; and Polk, when elected, felt obliged to insist upon this campaign boundary. To this, however, Great Britain naturally would not consent; it was, indeed, idle to expect her to do so, unless things should be kept as they were until a fairly large American population had grown up along the Pacific coast, and had thus put her in a position where she could hardly do anything else. Polk's administration was neither capable nor warlike, however well disposed to bluster; and the secretary of state, the timid, shifty, and selfish politician, Buchanan, naturally fond of facing both ways, was the last man to wish to force a quarrel on a high-spirited and determined antagonist like England. Accordingly, he made up his mind to back down and try for the line of 49°, as proposed by Calhoun, when in Tyler's Cabinet; and the English, for all their affected indifference, had been so much impressed by the warlike demonstrations in the United States, that they in turn were delighted, singing in a much lower key than before the "fifty-four forty" cry had been raised; accordingly they withdrew their former pretensions to the Columbia River and accepted the offered compromise. Now, however, came the question of getting the treaty through the Senate; and Buchanan sounded Benton, to see if he would undertake this task.

Benton, worried over the Texas matter, was willing to recede somewhat from the very high ground he had taken—although, of course, he insisted that he had been perfectly consistent throughout, and that the forty-ninth parallel was the line he had all along been striving

for. Under his lead the proposal for a treaty on the basis indicated was carried through the Senate, and the line in consequence ultimately became our frontier, in spite of the frantic opposition of the northwestern Democrats, the latter hurling every sort of charge of bad faith and treachery at their Southern associates, who had joined with the Whigs in defeating them. Benton's speech in support of the proposal was pitched much lower than had been his previous ones; and, a little forgetful of some of his own remarks, he was especially severe upon those members who denounced England, and held up a picture of her real or supposed designs to excite and frighten the people into needless opposition to her.

In its immediate effects the adoption of the forty-ninth parallel as the dividing line between the two countries was excellent, and entailed no loss of dignity on either. Yet, as there was no particular reason why we should show any generosity in our diplomatic dealings with England, it may well be questioned whether it would not have been better to have left things as they were until we could have taken all. Wars are, of course, as a rule to be avoided; but they are far better than certain kinds of peace. Every war in which we have been engaged, except the one with Mexico, has been justifiable in its origin; and each one, without any exception whatever, has left us better off, taking both moral and material considerations into account, than we should have been if we had not waged it.

CHAPTER XIII

THE ABOLITIONISTS DANCE TO THE SLAVE BARONS' PIPING

In 1844 the Whig candidate for the presidency, Henry Clay, was defeated by a Mr. Polk, the nominee of the Democracy. The majorities in several of the States were very small; this was the case, for example, in New York, the change in whose electoral vote would have also changed the entire result.

Up to 1860 there were very few political contests in which the dividing lines between right and wrong so nearly coincided with those drawn between the two opposing parties as in that of 1844. The Democrats favored the annexation of Texas, and the addition of new slave territory to the Union; the Whigs did not. Almost every good element in the country stood behind Clay; the vast majority of intelligent, high-minded, upright men supported him. Polk was backed by rabid Southern fire-eaters and slavery extensionists, who had deified negro bondage and exalted it beyond the Union, the Constitution, and everything else; by the almost solid foreign vote, still unfit for the duties of American citizenship; by the vicious and criminal classes in all the great cities of the North and in New Orleans; by the corrupt politicians, who found ignorance and viciousness tools ready forged to their hands, wherewith to perpetrate the gigantic frauds without which the election would have been lost; and, lastly, he was also backed indirectly but most powerfully by the political Abolitionists.

These Abolitionists had formed themselves into the Liberty party, and ran Birney for President; and though they polled but little over sixty thousand votes, yet as these were drawn almost entirely from the ranks of Clay's supporters, they were primarily responsible for his defeat; for the defections were sufficiently large to turn the scale in certain pivotal and closely contested States, notably New York. Their action in this case was wholly evil, alike in its immediate and its remote results; they simply played into the hands of the extreme slavery men like Calhoun, and became, for the time being, the willing accomplices of the latter. Yet they would have accomplished nothing had it not been for the frauds and outrages perpetrated by the gangs of native and foreign-born ruffians in the great cities, under the leadership of such brutal rowdies as Isaiah Rynders.

These three men, Calhoun, Birney, and Isaiah Rynders, may be taken as types of the classes that were chiefly instrumental in the election of Polk, and that must, therefore, bear the responsibility for all the evils attendant thereon, including among them the bloody and unrighteous war with Mexico. With the purpose of advancing the cause of abstract right, but with the result of sacrificing all that was best, most honest, and most high-principled in national politics, the Abolitionists joined hands with Northern roughs and Southern slavocrats to elect the man who was, excepting Tyler, the very smallest of the line of small Presidents who came in between Jackson and Lincoln.

Owing to a variety of causes, the Abolitionists have received an immense amount of hysterical praise, which they do not deserve, and have been credited with deeds done by other men, whom they in reality hampered and

opposed rather than aided. After 1840 the professed Abolitionists formed but a small and comparatively unimportant portion of the forces that were working toward the restriction and ultimate destruction of slavery; and much of what they did was positively harmful to the cause for which they were fighting. Those of their number who considered the Constitution as a league with death and hell, and who therefore advocated a dissolution of the Union, acted as rationally as would antipolygamists nowadays if, to show their disapproval of Mormonism, they should advocate that Utah should be allowed to form a separate nation. The only hope of ultimately suppressing slavery lay in the preservation of the Union, and every Abolitionist who argued or signed a petition for its dissolution was doing as much to perpetuate the evil he complained of as if he had been a slaveholder. The Liberty party, in running Birney, simply committed a political crime, evil in almost all its consequences; they in no sense paved the way for the Republican party, or helped forward the antislavery cause, or hurt the existing organizations. Their effect on the Democracy was *nil;* and all they were able to accomplish with the Whigs was to make them put forward for the ensuing campaign a slaveholder from Louisiana, with whom they were successful. Such were the remote results of their conduct; the immediate evils they produced have already been alluded to. They bore considerable resemblance—except that, after all, they really did have a principle to contend for—to the political prohibitionists of the present day, who go into the third party organizations, and are, not even excepting the saloon-keepers themselves, the most efficient allies on whom intemperance and the liquor traffic can count.

Antislavery men like Giddings, who supported Clay, were doing a thousandfold more effective work for the cause they had at heart than all the voters who supported Birney; or, to speak more accurately, they were doing all they could to advance the cause, and the others were doing all they could to hold it back. Lincoln in 1860 occupied more nearly the ground held by Clay than that held by Birney; and the men who supported the latter in 1844 were the prototypes of those who wished to oppose Lincoln in 1860, and only worked less hard because they had less chance. The ultra-Abolitionists discarded expediency, and claimed to act for abstract right, on principle, no matter what the results might be; in consequence they accomplished very little, and that as much for harm as for good, until they ate their words, went counter to their previous course, thereby acknowledging it to be bad, and supported in the Republican party the men and principles they had so fiercely condemned. The Liberty party was not in any sense the precursor of the Republican party, which was based as much on expediency as on abstract right, and was therefore able to accomplish good instead of harm. To say that the extreme Abolitionists triumphed in Republican success and were causes of it, is as absurd as it would be to call prohibitionists successful if, after countless futile efforts totally to prohibit the liquor traffic, and after savage denunciation of those who try to regulate it, they should then turn round and form a comparatively insignificant portion of a victorious high-license party.

Many people in speaking of the Abolitionists apparently forget that the national government, even under Republican rule, would never have meddled with slavery in the various States unless as a war measure,

made necessary by the rebellion into which the South was led by a variety of causes, of which slavery was chief, but among which there were others that were also prominent; such as the separatist spirit of certain of the communities and the unscrupulous, treacherous ambition of such men as Davis, Floyd, and the rest. The Abolitionists' political organizations, such as the Liberty party, generally produced very little effect either way, and were scarcely thought of during the contests waged for freedom in Congress. The men who took a great and effective part in the fight against slavery were the men who remained within their respective parties; like the Democrats Benton and Wilmot, or the Whigs Seward and Stevens. When a new party with more clearly defined principles was formed, they, for the most part, went into it; but, like all other men who have ever had a really great influence, whether for good or bad, on American politics, they did not act independently of parties, but on the contrary kept within party lines—although, of course, none of them were mere blind and unreasoning partisans.

The plea that slavery was a question of principle, on which no compromise could be accepted, might have been made and could still be made on twenty other points—woman suffrage, for instance. Of course, to give women their just rights does not by any means imply that they should necessarily be allowed to vote, any more than the bestowal of the rights of citizenship upon blacks and aliens must of necessity carry with it the same privilege. But there were until lately, and in some States there are now, laws on the statute-book in reference to women that are in principle as unjust, and that are quite as much the remnants of archaic barbarism as was the old slave code; and though it is true that

they do not work anything like the evil of the latter, they yet certainly work evil enough. The same laws that in one Southern State gave a master a right to whip a slave also allowed him to whip his wife, provided he used a stick no thicker than his little finger; the legal permission to do the latter was even more outrageous than that to do the former, yet no one considered it a ground for wishing a dissolution of the Union or for declaring against the existing parties. The folly of voting the Liberty ticket in 1844 differed in degree, but not at all in kind, from the folly of voting the Woman Suffrage ticket in 1884.

The intrigue for the annexation of Texas, and for thereby extending the slave territory of the Union, had taken shape toward the close of Tyler's term of office, while Calhoun was secretary of state. Benton, as an aggressive Western man, desirous of seeing our territorial possessions extended in any direction, north or south, always hoped that in the end Texas might be admitted into the Union; but he disliked seeing any premature steps taken, and was no party to the scheme of forcing an immediate annexation in the interests of slavery. Such immediate annexation was certain, among other things, to bring us into grave difficulties not only with Mexico, but also with England, which was strongly inclined to take much interest of a practical sort in the fate of Texas, and would, of course, have done all it could to bring about the abolition of slavery in that State. The Southerners, desirous of increasing the slave domain, and always in a state of fierce alarm over the proximity of any free State that might excite a servile insurrection, were impatient to add the Lone Star Republic of the Rio Grande to the number of their States; the southwesterners fell in with them, influ-

enced, though less strongly, by the same motives, and also by the lust for new lands and by race hatred toward the Mexicans and traditional jealousy of Great Britain; and these latter motives induced many northwesterners to follow suit. By a judicious harping on all these strings Jackson himself, whose name was still a mighty power among the masses, was induced to write a letter favoring instant and prompt annexation.

This letter was really procured for political purposes. Tyler had completely identified himself with the Democracy, and especially with its extreme separatist wing, to which Calhoun also belonged, and which had grown so as to be already almost able to take the reins. The separatist chiefs were intriguing for the presidency, and were using annexation as a cry that would help them; and, failing in this attempt, many of the leaders were willing to break up the Union, and turn the Southern States, together with Texas, into a slaveholding confederacy. After Benton, the great champion of the old-style Union Democrats was Van Buren, who was opposed to immediate annexation, sharing the feeling that prevailed throughout the Northeast generally; although in certain circles all through the country there were men at work in its favor, largely as a mere matter of jobbery and from base motives, on account of speculations in Texan land and scrip, into which various capitalists and adventurers had gone rather extensively. Jackson, though a Southerner, warmly favored Van Buren, and was bitterly opposed to separatists; but the latter, by cunningly working on his feelings, without showing their own hands, persuaded him to write the letter mentioned, and promptly used it to destroy the chances of Van Buren, who was the man they chiefly feared; and though Jackson, at last roused to what was

going on, immediately announced himself as in favor of Van Buren's candidacy, it was too late to undo the mischief.

Benton showed on this, as on many other occasions, much keener political ideas than his great political chief. He was approached by a politician, who himself was either one of those concerned in the presidential intrigues, or else one of their dupes, and who tried to win him over to take the lead on their side, complimenting him upon his former services to the cause of territorial expansion toward the southwest. Ordinarily the great Missourian was susceptible enough to such flattery; but on this occasion, preoccupied with the idea of an intrigue for the presidency, and indignant that there should be an effort made to implicate him in it, especially as it was mixed up with schemes of stock-jobbing and of disloyalty to the Union, he took fire at once, and answered with hot indignation, in words afterward highly resented by his questioner, "that it was on the part of some an intrigue for the presidency, and a plot to dissolve the Union; on the part of others, a Texas scrip and land speculation; and that he was against it." The answer was published in the papers, and brought about a total break between Benton and the annexation party.

He was now thoroughly on the alert, and actively opposed at all points the schemes of those whom he regarded as concerned in or instigating the intrigue. He commented harshly on Tyler's annual message, which made a strong plea for annexation, even at the cost of a war both with Great Britain and Mexico; also on Calhoun's letter to Lord Aberdeen, which was certainly a remarkable diplomatic document—being a thesis on slavery and the benefits resulting from it. Tyler's ob-

ject was to prepare the way for a secret treaty, which should secure the desired object. Benton, in the course of some severe strictures on his acts, said, very truly, that it was evidently the intention to keep the whole matter as secret as possible until the treaty was concluded, "and then to force its adoption for the purpose of increasing the area of slave territory, or to make its rejection a cause for the secession of the Southern States; and in either event and in all cases to make the question of annexation a controlling one in the nomination of presidential candidates, and also in the election itself."

When the treaty proposed by the administration was rejected, and when it became evident that neither Tyler nor Calhoun, the two most prominent champions of the extreme separatists, had any chance for the Democratic nomination, the disunion side of the intrigue was brought to the front in many of the Southern States, beginning of course with South Carolina. A movement was made for a convention of the Southern States, to be held in the interest of the scheme; the key-note being struck in the cry of "Texas or disunion!" But this convention was given up, on account of the strong opposition it excited in the so-called "Border States"—an opposition largely stirred up and led by Benton. Once more the haughty slave leaders of the Southeast had found that in the Missouri senator they had an opponent whose fearlessness quite equalled their own, and whose stubborn temper and strength of purpose made him at least a match for themselves, in spite of all their dash and fiery impetuosity. It must have sounded strange, indeed, to Northern ears, accustomed to the harsh railings and insolent threats of the South Carolina senators, to hear one of the latter complaining that

Benton's tone in the debate was arrogant, overbearing, and dictatorial toward those who were opposed to him. This same senator, McDuffie, had been speaking of the proposed Southern meeting at Nashville; and Benton warned him that such a meeting would never take place, and that he had mistaken the temper of the Tennesseeans; and also reminded him that General Jackson was still alive, and that the South Carolinians in particular must needs be careful if they hoped to agree with his followers, whose name was still legion, because he would certainly take the same position toward a disunion movement in the interests of slavery that he had already taken toward a nullification movement in the interests of free trade. "Preservation of the federal Union is as strong in the old Roman's heart now as ever; and while, as a Christian, he forgives all that is past (if it were past), yet no old tricks under new names! Texas disunion will be to him the same as tariff disunion; and if he detects a Texas disunionist nestling into his bed, I say again: Woe unto the luckless wight!" Boldly and forcibly he went on to paint the real motives of the promoters of the scheme, and the real character of the scheme itself; stating that, though mixed up with various speculative enterprises and with other intrigues, yet disunion was at the bottom of it all, and that already the cry had become: "Texas without the Union, rather than the Union without Texas!" "Under the pretext of getting Texas into the Union the scheme is to get the South out of it. A Southern Confederacy stretching from the Atlantic to the Californias . . . is the cherished vision of disappointed ambition." He bitterly condemned secession, as simply disunion begat by nullification, and went on to speak of his own attitude in apparently opposing the admission of Texas, which

he had always desired to see become a part of the Union, and which he had always insisted rightfully belonged to us, and to have been given away by Monroe's treaty with Spain. "All that is intended and foreseen. The intrigue for the presidency was the first act in the drama; the dissolution of the Union the second. And I, who hate intrigue and love the Union, can only speak of the intriguers and disunionists with warmth and indignation. The oldest advocate for the recovery of Texas, I must be allowed to speak in just terms of the criminal politicians who prostituted the question of its recovery to their own base purposes, and delayed its success by degrading and disgracing it. A Western man, and coming from a State more than any other interested in the recovery of this country, so unaccountably thrown away by the treaty of 1819, I must be allowed to feel indignant at seeing Atlantic politicians seizing upon it, and making it a sectional question for the purposes of ambition and disunion. I have spoken warmly of these plotters and intriguers; but I have not permitted their conduct to alter my own, or to relax my zeal for the recovery of the sacrificed country. I have helped to reject the disunion treaty; and that obstacle being removed, I have brought in the bill which will insure the recovery of Texas, with peace and honor, and with the Union."

It is important to remember, in speaking of his afterward voting to admit Texas, that this was what he had all along favored, and that he now opposed it only on account of special circumstances. In both cases he was right; for, slavery or no slavery, it would have been a most unfortunate thing for us, and still worse for the Texans, if the latter had been allowed to develop into an independent nation. Benton deserves the greatest

credit for the way in which he withstood the ignorant popular feeling of his own section in regard to Tyler's proposed treaty; and not only did he show himself able to withstand pressure from behind him, but also prompt in resenting threats made by outsiders. When McDuffie told him that the remembrance of his attitude on the bill would, to his harm, meet him on some future day, like the ghost that appeared to Brutus at Philippi, he answered:

"I can promise the ghost and his backers that if the fight goes against me at this new Philippi, with which I am threatened, and the enemies of the American Union triumph over me as the enemies of Roman liberty triumphed over Brutus and Cassius, I shall not fall upon my sword, as Brutus did, though Cassius be killed, and run it through my own body; but I shall save it and save myself for another day and another use,—for the day when the battle of the disunion of these states is to be fought, not with words but with iron, and for the hearts of the traitors who appear in arms against their country."

Such a stern, defiant, almost prophetic warning did more to help the Union cause than volumes of elaborate constitutional argument, and it would have been well for the Northern States had they possessed men as capable of uttering it as was the iron Westerner. Benton always showed at his best when the honor or integrity of the nation was menaced, whether by foes from without or by foes from within. On such occasions his metal always rang true. When there was any question of breaking faith with the Union, or of treachery toward it, his figure always loomed up as one of the chief in the ranks of its defenders; and his follies and weaknesses sink out of sight when we think of the tremendous debt

which the country owes him for his sorely tried and unswerving loyalty.

The treaty alluded to by Benton in his speech against the abortive secession movement was the one made with Texas while Calhoun was secretary of state, and submitted to the Senate by Tyler, with a message as extraordinary as some of his secretary's utterances. The treaty was preposterously unjust and iniquitous. It provided for the annexation of Texas, and also of a very large portion of Mexico, to which Texas had no possible title, and this without consulting Mexico in any way whatever; Calhoun advancing the plea that it was necessary to act immediately on account of the danger that Texas was in of falling under the control of England, and therefore having slavery abolished within its borders; while Tyler blandly announced that we had acquired title to the ceded territory—which belonged to one power and was ceded to us by another—through his signature to the treaty, and that, pending its ratification by the Senate, he had despatched troops to the scene of action to protect the ceded land "from invasion"—the territory to be thus protected from Mexican invasion being then and always having been part and parcel of Mexico.

Benton opposed the ratification of the treaty in a very strong speech, during which he mercilessly assailed both Tyler and Calhoun. The conduct of the former he dismissed with the contemptuous remark that he had committed "a caper about equal to the mad freaks with which the unfortunate Emperor Paul, of Russia, was accustomed to astonish Europe"; and roughly warned him to be careful how he tried to imitate Jackson's methods, because in heroic imitations there was no middle ground, and if he failed to fill the rôle of hero he would then per-

force find himself playing that of harlequin. Calhoun received more attention, for he was far more worthy of a foeman's steel than was his nominal superior, and Benton exposed at length the wilful exaggeration and the perversion of the truth of which the Carolinian had been guilty in trying to raise the alarm of English interference in Texas, for the purpose of excusing the haste with which the treaty was carried through.

He showed at length the outrage we should inflict upon Mexico by seizing "two thousand miles of her territory, without a word of explanation with her, and by virtue of a treaty with Texas to which she was no party"; and he conclusively proved, making use of his own extensive acquaintance with history, especially American history, that the old Texas, the only territory that the Texans themselves or we could claim with any shadow of right, made but a fraction of the territory now "ceded" to us. He laughed at the idea of calling the territory Texas, and speaking of its forcible cutting off as reannexation, "Humboldt calls it New Mexico, Chihuahua, Coahuila and Nuevo Santander; and the civilized world may qualify this *re*annexation by some odious and terrible epithet . . . robbery"; then he went on to draw a biting contrast between our treatment of Mexico and our treatment of England. "Would we take two thousand miles of Canada in the same way? I presume not. And why not? Why not treat Great Britain and Mexico alike? Why not march up to 'fifty-four forty' as courageously as we march upon the Rio Grande? Because Great Britain is powerful and Mexico weak—a reason which may fail in policy as much as in morals." Also he ridiculed the flurry of fear into which the Southern slaveholders affected to be cast by the dread of England's hostility to

slavery, when they had just acquiesced in making a treaty with her by which we bound ourselves to help to put down the slave-trade. He then stated his own position, showing why he wished us to have the original Texan lands, if we could get them honorably and without robbing Mexico of new territory; and at the same time sneered at Calhoun and Tyler because they had formerly favored the Monroe treaty, by which we abandoned our claims to them:

"We want Texas, that is to say, the Texas of La Salle; and we want it for great natural reasons, obvious as day, and permanent as nature. We want it because it is geographically appurtenant to our division of North America, essential to our political, commercial, and social system, and because it would be detrimental and injurious to us to have it fall into the hands or sink under the domination of any foreign power. For these reasons I was against sacrificing the country when it was thrown away—and thrown away by those who are now so suddenly possessed of a fury to get it back. For these reasons I am for getting it back whenever it can be done with peace and honor, or even at the price of just war against any intrusive European power; but I am against all disguise and artifice—against all pretexts—and especially against weak and groundless pretexts, discreditable to ourselves and offensive to others, too thin and shallow not to be seen through by every beholder, and merely invented to cover unworthy purposes."

The treaty was rejected by an overwhelming vote, although Buchanan led a few of his time-serving comrades from the North to the support of the extreme Southern element. Benton then tried, but failed, to get through a bill providing for a joint agreement between

Mexico, Texas, and the United States to settle definitely all boundary questions. Meanwhile the presidential election occurred, with the result already mentioned. The separatist and annexationist Democrats, the extreme slavery wing of the party, defeated Van Buren and nominated Polk, who was their man; the Whigs nominated Clay, who was heartily opposed to all the schemes of the disunion and extreme slavery men, and who, if elected, while he might very properly have consented to the admission of Texas with its old boundaries, would never have brought on a war nor have attempted to add a vast extent of new slave territory to the Union. Clay would have been elected, and the slavery disunionists defeated, if in the very nick of time the Abolitionists had not stepped in to support the latter, and by their blindness in supporting Birney given the triumph to their own most bitter opponents. Then the Abolitionists, having played their only card, and played it badly, had to sit still and see what evil their acts had produced; they had accomplished just as much as men generally do accomplish when they dance to the tune that their worst foes play.

Polk's election gave an enormous impulse to the annexation movement, and made it doubly and trebly difficult for any one to withstand it. The extreme disunion and slavery men, of course, hated Benton, himself a southwesterner from a slaveholding State, with peculiar venom, on account of his attitude, very justly regarding him as the main obstacle in their path; and the din and outcry raised against all who opposed the schemes of the intriguers was directed with especial fury against the Missourian. He was accused of being allied to the Whigs, of wishing to break up the Democracy, and of many other things. Indeed, Benton's own

people were very largely against him, and it must always be remembered that whereas northeastern statesmen were certain to be on the popular side in taking a stand against the extreme proslavery men, Benton's position was often just the reverse. With them it was politic to do right; with him it was not; and for this reason the praise awarded the latter should be beyond measure greater than that awarded to the former.

Still, there can be little question that he was somewhat, even although only slightly, influenced by the storm of which he had to bear the brunt; indeed, he would have been more than human if he had not been; and probably this outside pressure was one among the causes that induced him to accept a compromise in the matter, which took effect just before Polk was inaugurated. The House of Representatives had passed a resolution giving the consent of Congress to the admission of Texas as a State, and allowing it the privilege of forming four additional States out of its territory, whenever it should see fit. The line of the Missouri Compromise, 36° 30′, was run through this new territory, slavery being prohibited in the lands lying north of it, and permissible or not, according to the will of the State seeking admission, in those lying south of it. Benton meanwhile had introduced a bill merely providing that negotiations should be entered into with Texas for its admission, the proposed treaty or articles of agreement to be submitted to the Senate or to Congress. He thereby kept the control in the hands of the legislature, which the joint resolution did not; and moreover, as he said in his speech, he wished to provide for due consideration being shown Mexico in the arrangement of the boundary, and for the matter being settled by commissioners.

Neither resolution nor bill could get through by itself; and accordingly it was proposed to combine both into one measure, leaving the President free to choose either plan. To this proposition Benton finally consented, it being understood that, as only three days of Tyler's term remained, the execution of the act would be left to the incoming President, and that the latter would adopt Benton's plans. The friends of the admission of Texas assured the doubtful voters that such would be the case. Polk himself gave full assurance that he would appoint a commission, as provided by Benton's bill, if passed, with the House resolution as an alternative; and McDuffie, Calhoun's friend, and the senator from South Carolina, announced without reserve that Calhoun—for Tyler need not be considered in the matter, after it had been committed to the great Nullifier—would not have the "audacity" to try to take the settlement of the question away from the President, who was to be inaugurated on the 4th of March. On the strength of these assurances, which, if made good, would, of course, have rendered the "alternative" a merely nominal one, Benton supported the measure, which was then passed. Contrary to all expectation, Calhoun promptly acted upon the legislative clause, and Polk made no effort to undo what the former had done. This caused intense chagrin and anger to the Bentonians; but they should certainly have taken such a contingency into account, and though they might with much show of reason say that they had been tricked into acting as they had done, yet it is probable that the immense pressure from behind had made Benton too eager to follow any way he could find that would take him out of the position into which his conscience had led him. No amount of pressure would have made him

deliberately sanction a wrong; but it did render him a little less wary in watching to see that the right was not infringed upon. It was most natural that he should be anxious to find a common ground for himself and his constituents to stand on; but it is to be regretted that this anxiety to find a common ground should have made him willing to trust blindly to vague pledges and promises, which he ought to have known would not be held in the least binding by those on whose behalf they were supposed to be made.

Acting under this compromise measure Texas was admitted, and the foundation for our war with Mexico was laid. Calhoun, under whom this was done, nevertheless sincerely regretted the war itself, and freely condemned Polk's administration for bringing it on; his own position being that he desired to obtain without a war what it was impossible we should get except at the cost of one. Benton, who had all along consistently opposed doing a wrong to Mexico, attacked the whole war party, and in a strong and bitter speech accused Calhoun of being the cause of the contest; showing plainly that, whatever the ex-secretary of state might say in regard to the acts immediately precipitating the conflict, he himself was responsible as being in truth their original cause. While stating his conviction, however, that Calhoun was the real author of the war, Benton added that he did not believe that war was his object, although an inevitable incident of the course he had pursued.

Although heartily opposed to the war in its origin, Benton very properly believed in prosecuting it with the utmost vigor when once we were fairly in; and it was mainly owing to him that the proposed policy of a "masterly inactivity" was abandoned, and the scheme

of pushing straight for the city of Mexico adopted in its stead. Indeed, it was actually proposed to make him lieutenant-general, and therefore the commander-in-chief of our forces in Mexico; but this was defeated in the Senate, very fortunately, as it would have been a great outrage upon Scott, Taylor, and every other soldier with real military training. It seems extraordinary that Benton himself should not have seen the absurdity and wrong of such a proposition.

The wonderful hardihood and daring shown in the various expeditions against Mexico, especially in those whereby her northwest territory was wrested from her, naturally called forth all Benton's sympathy; and one of his best speeches was that made to welcome Doniphan's victorious volunteers after their return home from their famous march to Chihuahua.

CHAPTER XIV

SLAVERY IN THE NEW TERRITORIES

HARDLY was Polk elected before it became evident to Benton and the other Jacksonians that the days of the old Union or Nationalist Democracy were over, and that the separatist and disunion elements within the party had obtained the upper hand. The first sign of the new order of things was the displacement of Blair, editor of the *Globe*, the Democratic newspaper organ. Blair was a strong Unionist, and had been bitterly hostile to Calhoun and the Nullifiers. He had also opposed Tyler, the representative of those States'-rights and separatist Democrats, who by their hostility to Jackson had been temporarily driven into the Whig camp, and who, finding themselves in very uncongenial society, and seeing, moreover, that their own principles were gradually coming to the front in the old party, had begun drifting back again into it. Polk's chances of election were so precarious that he was most anxious to conciliate the separatists; besides which he at heart sympathized with their views, and had himself been brought forward in the Democratic convention to beat the National candidate, Van Buren. Moreover, Tyler withdrew from the contest in his favor; in part payment for which help, soon after the election, Blair was turned out, and Ritchie, of Virginia, a man whose views suited the new Democratic leaders, was put in his place; to the indignation not only of Benton, but also of Jackson himself, then almost on his death-bed. Of course the break between the two wings was as yet by no means complete. Polk needed the Union Democrats, and the latter were

still in good party standing. Benton himself, as has been seen, was offered the command of all the forces in Mexico, but the governmental policy, and the attitude of the party in Congress after 1844, were widely different from what they had been while Jackson's influence was supreme, or while the power he left behind him was wielded by a knot of Union men.

From this time the slavery question dwarfed all others, and was the one with which Benton, as well as other statesmen, had mainly to deal. He had been very loath to acknowledge that it was ever to become of such overshadowing importance; until late in his life he had not realized that, interwoven with the disunionist movement, it had grown so as to become in reality the one and only question before the people; but, this once thoroughly understood, he henceforth devoted his tremendous energies to the struggle with it. He possessed such phenomenal power of application and of study, and his capacity for and his delight in work were so extraordinary, that he was able at the same time to grapple with many other subjects of importance, and to present them in a way that showed he had thoroughly mastered them both in principle and detail—as witness his speech in favor of giving the control of the coast survey to the navy; but henceforth the importance of his actions lay in their relation to the slavery extension movements.

He had now entered on what may fairly be called the heroic part of his career; for it would be difficult to choose any other word to express our admiration for the unflinching and defiant courage with which, supported only by conscience and by his loving loyalty to the Union, he battled for the losing side, although by so doing he jeopardized and eventually ruined his political prospects, being finally, as punishment for his boldness

in opposing the dominant faction of the Missouri Democracy, turned out of the Senate, wherein he had passed nearly half his life. Indeed, his was one of those natures that show better in defeat than in victory. In his career there were many actions that must command our unqualified admiration; such were his hostility to the Nullifiers, wherein, taking into account his geographical location and his refusal to compromise, he did better than any other public man, not even excepting Jackson and Webster; his belief in honest money; and his attitude toward all questions involving the honor or the maintenance and extension of the Union. But in all these matters he was backed more or less heartily by his State, and he had served four terms in the federal Senate as the leading champion and representative, not alone of Missouri, but also of the entire West. When, however, the slavery question began to enter upon its final stage, Benton soon found himself opposed to a large and growing faction of the Missouri Democracy, which increased so rapidly that it soon became dominant. But he never for an instant yielded his convictions, even when he saw the ground being thus cut from under his feet, fighting for the right as sturdily as ever, facing his fate fearlessly, and going down without a murmur. The contrast between the conduct toward the slavery disunionists of this Democrat from a slaveholding State, with a hostile majority at home against him, and the conduct of Webster, a Whig, enthusiastically backed by his own free State, in the same issue, is a painful one for the latter. Indeed, on any moral point, Benton need have no cause to fear comparison with any of his great rivals in the political arena. During his career, the United States Senate was perhaps the most influential, and certainly the ablest legislative, body in the

world; and after Jackson's presidency came to an end the really great statesmen and political leaders of the country were to be found in it, and not in the Executive chair. The period during which the great Missourian was so prominent a figure in our politics, and which lasted up to the time of the Civil War, might very appropriately be known in our history as the time of the supremacy of the Senate. Such senators as Benton, Webster, Clay, and Calhoun, and later on Douglas, Seward, and Sumner, fairly towered above presidents like the obscure Southerners, Tyler and Polk, or the truckling, time-serving Northern politicians, Pierce and Buchanan. During the long interval coming between the two heroic ages of American history—the age of Washington and Franklin, and the age of Lincoln and Grant—it was but rarely that the nation gave its greatest gift to its best or its greatest son.

Benton had come into the Senate at the same time that Missouri was admitted into the Union, with thanks, therefore, to the same measure, the Missouri Compromise bill. This shut out slavery from all territory north of the line of 36° 30′, and did not make it obligatory even where it was permissible; and the immediate cause of Benton's downfall was his courage and persistency in defending the terms of this compromise from the attacks of the Southern slavery extensionists and disunionists. The proslavery feeling was running ever higher and higher throughout the South; and his stand on this question aroused the most furious anger among a constantly increasing number of his constituents, and made him the target for bitter and savage assaults on the part of his foes, the spirit of hostility against him being carried to such length as finally almost to involve him in an open brawl on the floor of the Senate with one of his col-

leagues, Foote, who, like his fellow fire-eaters, found that Benton was not a man who could be bullied. Indeed, his iron will and magnificent physique both fitted him admirably for such a contest against odds, and he seems to have entered into it with a positive zest.

The political Abolitionists having put Polk in power, their action bore fruit after its kind, and very soon the question had to be faced, as to what should be done with the immense tracts of territory conquered from Mexico. Benton opposed, as being needless and harmful, the Wilmot Proviso, which forbade the introduction of slavery into any part of the territory so acquired. He argued, and produced in evidence the laws and constitution of Mexico, that the soil of California and Mexico was already free, and that as slavery would certainly never be, and indeed could never be, introduced into either Territory, the agitation of the question could only result in harm. Calhoun and the other extreme slavery leaders welcomed the discussion over this proviso, which led Benton to remark that the Abolitionists and the Nullifiers were necessary to each other—the two blades of a pair of shears, neither of which could cut until they were joined together.

When Calhoun introduced his famous resolutions declaring that Congress had no power to interfere with slavery in the Territories, and therefore no power to prevent the admission of new States except on the condition of their prohibiting slavery within their limits, Benton promptly and strongly opposed them as being firebrands needlessly thrown to inflame the passions of the extremists, and, moreover, as being disunionist in tendency. The following is his own account of what then took place: "Mr. Calhoun said he had expected the support of Mr. Benton 'as the representative of a slave-

holding state.' Mr. Benton answered that it was impossible that he could have expected such a thing. 'Then,' said Mr. Calhoun, 'I shall know where to find that gentleman.' To which Mr. Benton said: 'I shall be found in the right place—on the side of my country and the Union.' This answer, given on that day and on the spot, is one of the incidents of his life which Mr. Benton will wish posterity to remember." We can easily pardon the vanity which wishes and hopes that such an answer, given under such conditions, may be remembered. Indeed, Benton's attitude throughout all this period should never be forgotten; and the words he spoke in answer to Calhoun marked him as the leader among those Southerners who held the nation above any section thereof, even their own, and whose courage and self-sacrifice in the cause of the Union entitled them to more praise than by right belongs to any equal number of Northerners; those Southerners who in the Civil War furnished Farragut, Thomas, Bristow, and countless others as loyal as they were brave. The effect of Benton's teachings and the still remaining influence of his intense personality did more than aught else to keep Missouri within the Union, when her sister States went out of it.

Benton always regarded much of the slavery agitation in the South as being political in character, and the result of the schemes of ambitious and unscrupulous leaders. He believed that Calhoun had introduced a set of resolutions that were totally uncalled for, simply for the purpose of carrying a question to the slave States on which they could be formed into a unit against the free States; and there is much to be said in support of his view. Certainly the resolutions mark the beginning of the first great slavery agitation throughout the Southern

States, which was engineered and guided for their own ends by politicians like Jefferson Davis. These resolutions were absolutely inconsistent with many of Calhoun's previous declarations; and that fact was also sharply commented on by Benton in his speeches and writings. He also criticised with caustic severity Calhoun's statements that he wished to save the Union by forcing the North to take a position so agreeable to the South as to make the latter willing not to separate. He showed that Calhoun's proposed "constitutional" and "peaceable" methods of bringing this about by prohibiting commercial intercourse between the two sections would themselves be flagrant breaches of the Constitution and acts of disunion—all the more so as it was proposed to discriminate in favor of the Northwest as against the Northeast. Calhoun wished to bring about a convention of the Southern States, in order to secure the necessary unity of action; and one of the main obstacles to the success of the plan was Missouri's refusal to take part in it. Great efforts were made to win her over, and to beat down Benton; the extreme proslavery men honoring him with a hatred more intense than that they harbored toward any Northerner. Some of Calhoun's recent biographers have credited him with being really a Union man at heart. It seems absolutely impossible that this could have been the case; and the supposition is certainly not compatible with the belief that he retained his right senses. Benton characterizes his system of slavery agitation, very truthfully, as being one "to force issues upon the North under the pretext of self-defense, and to sectionalize the South, preparatory to disunion, through the instrumentality of sectional conventions, composed wholly of delegates from the slaveholding states."

When the question of the admission of Oregon came up, Calhoun attempted to apply to it a dogma wholly at variance with all his former positions on the subject. This was the theory of the self-extension of the slavery part of the Constitution to the Territories; that is, he held that the exclusion of slavery from any part of the new Territory was itself a subversion of the Constitution. Such a dogma was so monstrous in character, so illogical, so inconsistent with all his former theories, and so absolutely incompatible with the preservation of the Union, that it renders it impossible to believe that his asseverations of devotion to the latter were uttered honestly or in good faith. Most modern readers will agree with Benton that he deliberately worked to bring about secession.

Meanwhile the Missourian had gained an ally of his own stamp in the Senate. This was Houston, from the new State of Texas, who represented in that State, like Andrew Jackson in Tennessee, and Benton himself in Missouri, the old Nationalist Democracy, which held the preservation of the Union dear above all other things. Houston was a man after Benton's own heart, and was thoroughly Jacksonian in type. He was rough, honest, and fearless, a devoted friend and a vengeful enemy, and he promised that combination of stubborn courage and capacity of devotion to an ideal that renders a man an invaluable ally in a fight against odds for principle.

After much discussion and amendment, the Oregon bill, containing a radical antislavery clause, passed both houses and became a law in spite of the violent opposition of some of the Southerners, headed by Calhoun, who announced that the great strife between the North and the South was ended, and that the time had come

for the South to show that, though she prized the Union, yet there were matters which she regarded as of greater importance than its preservation. His ire was most fiercely excited by the action of Benton and Houston in supporting the bill, and after his return to South Carolina he denounced them by name as traitors to the South —"a denunciation," says Benton, "which they took for a distinction; as what he called treason to the South they knew to be allegiance to the Union." When it was proposed to extend by bill the Constitution of the United States into the Territories, with a view to carrying slavery into California, Utah, and New Mexico, Benton was again opposed to Calhoun. As a matter of course, too, he was the stoutest opponent of the Southern convention and other similar disunion movements that were beginning to take shape throughout the South, instigated by the two rank secession States of South Carolina and Mississippi.

Most of the momentous questions springing out of the war with Mexico were left by Polk as legacies to his successor, when the former went out of office, after an administration that Benton criticised with extreme sharpness, although he tried to shield the President by casting the blame for his actions upon his Cabinet advisers; characterizing the Mexican War as one of "speculation and intrigue," and as the "great blot" of his four years' term of office, and ridiculing the theory that we were acting in self-defense, or that our soil had been invaded. In 1848 the Democrats nominated Cass, a Northern proslavery politician of moderate abilities, and the Whigs put up and elected old Zachary Taylor, the rough frontier soldier and Louisiana slaveholder. The political Abolitionists again took a hand in the contest, but this time abandoned their abolition theories, substi-

tuting instead thereof the prohibition of slavery in the new Territories. They derived much additional importance from their alliance with a disappointed politician in the pivotal State of New York; and in this case, in sharp contrast to the result in 1844, their actions worked good, and not evil. Van Buren, chagrined and angered by the way he was treated by the regular Democrats, organized a revolt against them, and used the banner of the new Free Soil party as one under which to rally his adherents. This movement was of consequence mainly in New York, and there it soon became little more than a mere fight between the two sections of the Democracy. Benton himself visited this all-important State to try to patch up matters, but he fortunately failed. The factions proved very nearly equal in strength; and as a consequence the Whigs carried the State and the election, and once more held the reins of government.

When a Louisiana slaveholder was thus installed in the White House, the extreme Southern men may have thought that they were sure of him as an ally in their fight against freedom. But, if so, they soon found they had reckoned without their host, for the election of Taylor affords a curious, though not solitary, instance in which the American people builded better than they knew in choosing a chief executive. Nothing whatever was known of his political theories, and the Whigs nominated him simply because he was a successful soldier, likely to take the popular fancy. But once elected he turned out to have the very qualities we then most needed in a President—a stout heart, shrewd common sense, and thoroughgoing devotion to the Union. Although with widely different training from Benton, and nominally differing from him in politics, he was yet of

the same stamp both in character and principles; both were Union Southerners, not in the least afraid of openly asserting their opinions, and, if necessary, of making them good by their acts. In his first and only annual message, Taylor expressed, upon all the important questions of the day, views that were exactly similar to those advanced before or after by Benton himself in the Senate; and he used similar emphasis and plainness of speech. He declared the Union to be the greatest of blessings, which he would maintain in every way against whatever dangers might threaten it; he advised the admission of California, which wished to come in as a free State; he thought that the Territories of Utah and New Mexico should be left as they were; and he warned the Texans, who were blustering about certain alleged rights to New Mexican soil, and threatening to take them by force of arms, that this could not be permitted, and that the matter would have to be settled by the judicial authority of the United States. Benton heartily indorsed the message. Naturally, it was bitterly assailed by the disunionists under Calhoun; and even Clay, who entirely lacked Taylor's backbone, was dissatisfied with it as being too extreme in tone, and conflicting with his proposed compromise measures. These same compromise measures brought the Kentucky leader into conflict with Benton also, especially on the point of their interfering with the immediate admission of California into the Union.

This is not the place to discuss Clay's proposed compromise, which was not satisfactory to the extreme Southerners, and still less so to the Unionists and anti-slavery men. It consisted of five different parts, relating to the recovery of fugitive slaves, the suppression of the slave-trade in the District of Columbia, the admis-

sion of California as a State, and the territorial condition of Utah and New Mexico. Benton opposed it as mixing up incongruous measures; as being unjust to California, inasmuch as it confounded the question of her admission with the general slavery agitation in the United States; and above all as being a concession or capitulation to the spirit of disunion and secession, and therefore a repetition of the error of 1833. Benton always desired to meet and check any disunion movement at the very outset, and, if he had had his way, would have carried matters with a high hand whenever it came to dealing with threats of such a proceeding; and therein he was perfectly right. In regard to the proposed compromise he believed in dealing with each question as it arose, beginning with the admission of California, and refusing to have any compromise at all with those who threatened secession.

The slavery extensionists endeavored to have the Missouri compromise line stretched on to the Pacific. Benton, avowing his belief that slavery was an evil, opposed this, and gave his reasons why he did not wish to see the line which had been used to divide free and slave soil in the French or Louisiana purchase extended into the lands won from Mexico. Slavery had always existed in Louisiana, while it had been long abolished in Mexico. "The Missouri compromise line, extending to New Mexico and California, though astronomically the same as that in Louisiana, would be politically directly the opposite. One went through a territory all slave, and made one half free; the other would go through territory all free, and make one half slave." In fact Benton, as he grew older, unlike most of his compatriots, gained a clearer insight into the effects of slavery. This was shown in his comments upon Calhoun's statement, made

in the latter's last speech, in reference to the unequal development of the North and South; which, Benton said, was partly owing to the existence of "slavery itself, which he (Calhoun) was so anxious to extend." It was in this same speech that Calhoun hinted at his plan for a dual Executive—one President from the free and one from the slave States—a childish proposition, that Benton properly treated as a simple absurdity.

In his speech against the compromise, Benton discussed it, section by section, with great force, and with his usual blunt truthfulness. His main count was the injustice done to California by delaying her admittance, and making it dependent upon other issues; but he made almost as strong a point against the effort to settle the claims of Texas to New Mexican territory. The Texan threats to use force he treated with cavalier indifference, remarking that as long as New Mexico was a Territory, and therefore belonged to the United States, any controversy with her was a controversy with the federal government, which would know how to play her part by "defending her territory from invasion, and her people from violence"—a hint that had a salutary effect upon the Texans; in fact the disunionists, generally, were not apt to do much more than threaten while a Whig like Taylor was backed up by a Democrat like Benton. He also pointed out that it was not necessary, however desirable, to make a compact with Texas about the boundaries, as they could always be settled, whether she wished it or not, by a suit before the Supreme Court; and again intimated that a little show of firmness would remove all danger of a collision. "As to anything that Texas or New Mexico may do in taking or relinquishing possession, that is all moonshine. New Mexico is the property of the United States, and she cannot dispose

of herself or any part of herself, nor can Texas take her or any part of her." He showed a thorough acquaintance with New Mexican geography and history, and alluded to the bills he had already brought in, in 1844 and 1850, to establish a divisional line between the Territory and Texas, on the longitude first of one hundred and then of one hundred and two degrees. He recalled the fact that before the annexation of Texas, and in a bill proposing to settle all questions with her, he had inserted a provision forever prohibiting slavery in all parts of the annexed Territory lying west of the hundredth degree of longitude. He also took the opportunity of formally stating his opposition to any form of slavery extension, remarking that it was no new idea with him, but dated from the time when in 1804, while a law student in Tennessee, he had studied Blackstone as edited by the learned Virginian, Judge Tucker, who, in an appendix, treated of, and totally condemned, black slavery in the United States. The very difficulty, or, as he deemed it, the impossibility, of getting rid of the evil, made Benton all the more determined in opposing its extension. "The incurability of the evil is the greatest objection to the extension of slavery. If it is wrong for the legislator to inflict an evil which can be cured, how much more to inflict one that is incurable, and against the will of the people who are to endure it forever! I quarrel with no one for deeming slavery a blessing; I deem it an evil, and would neither adopt it nor impose it on others." The solution of the problem of disposing of existent slavery, he confessed, seemed beyond human wisdom; but "there is a wisdom above human, and to that we must look. In the meantime, do not extend the evil." In justification of his position he quoted previous actions of Congress, done under the

lead of Southern men, in refusing again and again, down to 1807, to allow slavery to be introduced into Indiana, when that community petitioned for it. He also repudiated strongly the whole spirit in which Clay had gotten up his compromise bill, stating that he did not believe in geographical parties; that he knew no North and no South, and utterly rejected any slavery compromises except those to be found in the Constitution. Altogether it was a great speech, and his opposition was one of the main causes of the defeat of Clay's measure.

Benton's position on the Wilmot Proviso is worth giving in his own words: "That measure was rejected again as heretofore, and by the votes of those who were opposed to extending slavery into the territories, because it was unnecessary and inoperative—irritating to the Slave States, without benefit to the Free States, a mere work of supererogation, of which the fruit was discontent. It was rejected, not on the principle of non-intervention; not on the principle of leaving to the territories to do as they pleased on the question, but because there had been intervention; because Mexican law and constitution had intervened, had abolished slavery by law in those dominions; which law would remain in force until repealed by Congress. All that the opponents to the extension of slavery had to do, then, was to do nothing. And they did nothing."

Before California was admitted into the Union old Zachary Taylor had died, leaving behind him a name that will always be remembered among our people. He was neither a great statesman nor yet a great commander; but he was an able and gallant soldier, a loyal and upright public servant, and a most kindly, honest, and truthful man. His death was a greater loss to the country than perhaps the people ever knew.

The bill for the admission of California as a free State, heartily sustained by Benton, was made a test question by the Southern disunionists; but on this occasion they were thoroughly beaten. The great struggle was made over a proposition to limit the southern boundary of the State to the line of 36° 30′, and to extend the Missouri line through to the Pacific, so as to authorize the existence of slavery in all the territory south of that latitude. This was defeated by a vote of thirty-two to twenty-four. Not only Benton, but also Spruance and Wales, of Delaware, and Underwood, of Kentucky, joined with the representatives from the free States in opposing it. Had it not been for the action of these four slave State senators in leaving their associates, the vote would have been a tie; and their courage and patriotism should be remembered. The bill was then passed by a vote of thirty-four to eighteen, two other Southern senators, Houston, of Texas, and Bell, of Tennessee, voting for it, in addition to the four already mentioned. After its passage, ten of the senators who had voted against it, including, of course, Jefferson Davis, and also Benton's own colleague from Missouri, Atchison, joined in a protest against what had been done, ending with a thinly veiled threat of disunion—"dissolution of the confederacy," as they styled it. Benton stoutly and successfully opposed allowing this protest to be received or entered upon the journal, condemning it, with a frankness that very few of his fellow senators would have dared to copy, as being sectional and disunion in form, and therefore unfit even for preservation on the records.

When the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850 was passed, through the help of some Northern votes, Benton refused to support it; and this was the last act of impor-

tance that he performed as United States senator. He had risen and grown steadily all through his long term of service; and during its last period he did greater service to the nation than any of his fellow senators. Compare his stand against the slavery extremists and disunionists, such as Calhoun, with the position of Webster at the time of his famous 7th of March speech, or with that of Clay when he brought in his compromise bill! In fact, as the times grew more troublesome, he grew steadily better able to do good work in them.

It is this fact of growth that especially marks his career. No other American statesman, except John Quincy Adams—certainly neither of his great contemporaries, Webster and Clay—kept doing continually better work throughout his term of public service, or showed himself able to rise to a higher level at the very end than at the beginning. Yet such was the case with Benton. He always rose to meet a really great emergency; and his services to the nation grew steadily in importance to the very close of his life. Whereas Webster and Clay passed their zenith and fell, he kept rising all the time.

CHAPTER XV

THE LOSING FIGHT

Benton had now finished his fifth and last term in the United States Senate. He had been chosen senator from Missouri before she was admitted into the Union, and had remained such for thirty years. During all that time the State had been steadily Democratic, the large Whig minority never being able to get control; but on the question of the extension of slavery the dominant party itself began at this time to break into two factions. Hitherto Benton had been the undisputed leader of the Democracy, but now the proslavery and disunionist Democrats organized a very powerful opposition to him; while he still received the enthusiastic support of an almost equally numerous body of followers. Although the extension of slavery and the preservation of the Union were the two chief and vital points on which the factions differed, yet the names by which they designated each other were adopted in consequence of their differing also on a third and only less important one. Benton was such a firm believer in hard money, and a currency of gold and silver, as to have received the nickname of "Old Bullion," and his followers were called "hards"; his opponents were soft-money men, in addition to being secessionists and proslavery fanatics, and took the name of "softs." The principles of the Bentonians were right, and those of their opponents wrong; but for all that the latter gradually gained upon the former. Finally, in the midst of Benton's fight against the extension of slavery into the Territories, the "softs" carried the Missouri legislature, and passed a series of

resolutions based upon those of Calhoun. These were most truculent and disloyal in tone, demanding that slavery be permitted to exist in all the new States to be admitted, and instructing their senators to vote accordingly. These resolutions were presented in the Senate by Benton's colleague from Missouri, Atchison, who was rather hostile to him and to every other friend of the Union, and later on achieved disreputable notoriety as a leader of the "border ruffians" in the affrays on the soil of Kansas. Benton at once picked up the glove that had been flung down. He utterly refused to obey the resolutions, denounced them savagely as being treasonable and offensive in the highest degree, asserted that they did not express the true opinions of the voters of the State, and appealed from the Missouri legislature to the Missouri people.

The issue between the two sides was now sharply brought out, and, as this took place toward the end of Benton's fifth term, the struggle to command the legislature which should re-elect him or give him a successor was most exciting. Benton himself took an active part in the preliminary canvass. Neither faction was able to get a majority of the members, and the deadlock was finally broken by the "softs" coming to the support of the Whigs, and helping them to elect Benton's rival. Thus, after serving his State faithfully and ably for thirty years, he was finally turned out of the position which he so worthily filled, because he had committed the crime of standing loyally by the Union.

But the stout old Nationalist was not in the least cast down or even shaken by his defeat. He kept up the fight as bitterly as ever, though now an old man, and in 1852 went to Congress as a representative Union Democrat. For thirty years he had been the autocrat of Mis-

souri politics, and had at one time wielded throughout his own State a power as great as Calhoun possessed in South Carolina; greater than Webster held in Massachusetts, or Clay in Kentucky. But the tide which had so long flowed in his favor now turned, and for the few remaining years of his life set as steadily against him; yet at no time of his long public career did he stand forth as honorably and prominently as during his last days, when he was showing so stern a front to his victorious foes. His love for work was so great that, when out of the Senate, he did not find even his incessant political occupations enough for him. During his contest for the senatorship his hands had been full, for he had spoken again and again throughout the entire State, his carefully prepared speeches showing remarkable power, and filled with scathing denunciation and invective, and biting and caustic sarcasm. But so soon as his defeat was assured he turned his attention immediately to literature, setting to work on his great "Thirty Years' View," of which the first volume was printed during his congressional term, and was quoted on the floor of the House, both by his friends and foes, during the debates in which he was taking part.

In 1852, when he was elected to Congress as a member of the House, he had supported Pierce for the presidency against Scott, a good general, but otherwise a wholly absurd and flatulent personage, who was the Whig nominee. But it soon became evident that Pierce was completely under the control of the secession wing of the party, and Benton thereafterward treated him with contemptuous hostility, despising him, and seeing him exactly as he was—a small politician, of low capacity and mean surroundings, proud to act as the servile tool of men worse than himself but also stronger and

abler. He was ever ready to do any work the slavery leaders set him, and to act as their attorney in arguing in its favor—to quote Benton's phrase, with "undaunted mendacity, moral callosity [and] mental obliquity." His last message to Congress in the slavery interest Benton spoke of as characteristic, and exemplifying "all the modes of conveying untruths which long ages have invented—direct assertion, fallacious inference, equivocal phrase, and false innuendo." As he entertained such views of the head of the Democratic party, and as this same head was in hearty accord with, and a good representative of, the mass of the rank and file politicians of the organization, it is small wonder that Benton found himself, on every important question that came up while he was in Congress, opposed to the mass of his fellow Democrats.

Although the great questions to which he devoted himself, while a representative in Congress, were those relating to the extension of slavery, yet he also found time to give to certain other subjects, working as usual with indomitable energy, and retaining his marvellous memory to the last. The idea of desponding or giving up, for any cause whatever, simply never entered his head. When his house, containing all the manuscript and papers of the nearly completed second volume of his "Thirty Years' View," was burned up, he did not delay a minute in recommencing his work, and the very next day spoke in Congress as usual.

His speeches were showing a steady improvement; they were not masterpieces, even at the last, but in every way, especially in style, they were infinitely superior to those that he had made on his first entrance into public life. Of course, a man with his intense pride in his country, and characterized by such a desire to see her

become greater and more united in every way, would naturally support the proposal to build a Pacific Railroad, and accordingly he argued for it at great length and with force and justness, at the same time opposing the propositions to build northern and southern transcontinental roads as substitutes for the proposed central route. He showed the character of the land through which the road would run, and the easiness of the passes across the Rockies, and prophesied a rapid increase of States as one of the results attendant upon its building. At the end of his speech he made an elaborate comparison of the courses of trade and commerce at different periods of the world's history, and showed that, as we had reached the Pacific coast, we had finally taken a position where our trade with the Oriental kingdoms, backed up by our own enormous internal development, rendered us more than ever independent of Europe.

In another speech he discussed very intelligently, and with his usual complete command of the facts of the case, some of the contemporary Indian uprisings in the far West. He attacked our whole Indian policy, showing that the corruption of the Indian agents, coupled with astute aggressions, were the usual causes of our wars. Further, he criticised our regular troops as being unfit to cope with the savages, and advocated the formation of companies of frontier rangers, who should also be settlers, and should receive from the government a bounty in land as part reward for their service. Many of his remarks on our Indian policy apply quite as well now as they did then, and our regular soldiers are certainly not the proper opponents for the Indians; but Benton's military views were, as a rule, the reverse of sensible, and we cannot accept his denunciations of the army, and especially of West Point, as being worth seri-

ous consideration. His belief in the marvellous efficacy of a raw militia, especially as regards war with European powers, was childish, and much of his feeling against the regular army officer was dictated by jealousy. He was, by all the peculiarities of his habits and education, utterly unfitted for military command; and it would have been an evil day for his good fame if Polk had succeeded in having him made lieutenant-general of our forces in Mexico.

His remarks upon our Indian policy were not the only ones he made that would bear study even yet. Certain of his speeches upon the different land-bounty and pension bills, passed nominally in the interests of veterans, but really through demagogy and the machination of speculators, could be read with profit by not a few congressmen at the present time. One of his utterances was, "I am a friend to old soldiers . . . but not to old speculators"; and while favoring proper pension bills he showed the foolishness and criminality of certain others very clearly, together with the fact that, when passed long after the services have been rendered, they always fail to relieve the real sufferers, and work in the interests of unworthy outsiders.

But his great speech, and one of the best and greatest that he ever made, was the one in opposition to the Kansas-Nebraska bill, which was being pushed through Congress by the fire-eaters and their Northern pro-slavery followers. His own position upon the measure was best expressed by the words he used in commenting on the remarks of a Georgian member: "He votes as a Southern man, and votes sectionally; I also am a Southern man, but vote nationally on national questions."

The Missouri Compromise of 1820 had expressly

abolished slavery in the Territory out of which Kansas and Nebraska were carved. By the proposed bill this compromise was to be repealed, and the famous doctrine of non-intervention, or "squatter sovereignty," was to take its place, the people of each Territory being allowed to choose for themselves whether they did or did not wish slavery. Benton attacked the proposal with all the strength of his frank, open nature, as "a bungling attempt to smuggle slavery into the territory, and throughout all the country, up to the Canada line and out to the Rocky Mountains." He showed exhaustively the real nature of the original Missouri Compromise, which, as he said, was forced by the South upon the North, and which the South now proposed to repeal, that it might humiliate the North still further. The compromise of 1820 was, he justly contended, right; it was like the original compromises of the Constitution, by which the slave States were admitted to the formation of the Union; no greater concession of principle was involved in the one case than in the other; and, had either compromise failed, the Union would not now be in existence. But the day when compromises had been necessary, or even harmless, had passed. The time had come when the extension of slavery was to be opposed in every constitutional way; and it was an outrage to propose to extend its domain by repealing all that part of a compromise measure which worked against it, when the South had already long taken advantage of such parts of the law as worked in its favor. Said Benton: "The South divided and took half, and now it will not do to claim the other half." Exactly as a proposition to destroy the slavery compromises of the Constitution would be an open attempt to destroy the Union, so, he said, the attempt to abrogate the com-

promise of 1820 would be a preparation for the same ending. "I have stood upon the Missouri Compromise for about thirty years, and mean to stand upon it to the end of my life . . . [it is] a binding covenant upon both parties, and the more so upon the South, as she imposed it."

The squatter-sovereignty theories of Douglas he treated with deserved ridicule, laughing at the idea that the Territories were not the actual property of the nation, to be treated as the latter wished, and having none of the rights of sovereign States; and he condemned even more severely the theory advanced to the effect that Congress had no power to legislate on slavery in the Territories. Thus, he pointed out that to admit any such theories was directly to reverse the principles upon which we had acted for seventy years in regard to the various Territories that from time to time grew to such size as entitled them to come into the Union as States. After showing that there was no excuse for bringing in the bill on the plea of settling the slavery question, since there was not a foot of territory in the United States where the subject of slavery was not already settled by law, he closed with an earnest appeal against such an attempt to break up the Union and outrage the North by forcing slavery into a land where its existence was already forbidden by law. His speech exceeded the hour allotted to it, and he was allowed to go on only by the courtesy of a member from Illinois, who, when some of the Southerners protested against his being heard further, gave up part of his own time to the grand old Missourian, and asked the House to hear him, if only "as the oldest living man in Congress, the only man in Congress who was present at the passage of the Missouri Compromise bill." Many a man at the North,

ashamed and indignant at seeing the politicians of his own section cower at the crack of the Southern whip, felt a glow of sincere gratitude and admiration for the rugged Westerner, who so boldly bade defiance to the ruling slave party that held the reins not only in his own section, but also in his own State, and to oppose which was almost certain political death.

The Gadsden treaty was also strongly opposed and condemned by Benton, who considered it to be part of a great scheme or movement in the interests of the slavery disunionists, of which he also believed the Kansas-Nebraska bill to be the first development—the "thin end of the wedge." He opposed the acquirement even of the small piece of territory we were actually able to purchase from Mexico; and showed good grounds for his belief that the administration, acting as usual only in the interest of the secessionists, had tried to get enough North-Mexican territory to form several new States, and had also attempted to purchase Cuba, both efforts being for the purpose of enabling the South either to become again dominant in the Union or else to set up a separate confederacy of her own. For it must be kept in mind that Benton always believed that the Southern disunion movements were largely due to conspiracies among ambitious politicians, who used the slavery question as a handle by which to influence the mass of the people. This view has certainly more truth in it than it is now the fashion to admit. His objection to the actual treaty was mainly based on its having been done by the executive without the consent of the legislature, and he also criticised it for the secrecy with which it had been put through. In bringing forward the first objection, however, he was confronted with Jefferson's conduct in acquiring Louisiana, which he en-

deavored, not very successfully, to show had nothing in common with the actions of Pierce, who, he said, simply demanded a check from the House with which to complete a purchase undertaken on his own responsibility.

Throughout his congressional term of service, Benton acted so as to deserve well of the Union as a whole, and most well of Missouri in particular. But he could not stem the tide of folly and madness in this State, and was defeated when he was a candidate for re-election. The Whigs had now disappeared from the political arena, and the Know-nothings were running through their short and crooked lease of life; they foolishly nominated a third candidate in Benton's district, who drew off enough votes from him to enable his proslavery Democratic competitor to win.

No sooner had he lost his seat in Congress than Benton, indefatigable as ever, set to work to finish his "Thirty Years' View," and produced the second volume in 1856, the year when he made his last attempt to regain his hold in politics, and to win Missouri back to the old Union standard. Although his own son-in-law, Fremont, the daring Western explorer, was running as the first presidential candidate ever nominated by the Republicans, the old partisan voted for the Democrat, Buchanan. He did not like Buchanan, considering him weak and unsuitable, but the Republican party he believed to be entirely too sectional in character for him to give it his support. For governor there was a triangular fight, the Know-nothings having nominated one candidate, the secessionist Democrats a second, while Benton himself ran as the choice of the Union Democracy. He was now seventy-four years old, but his mind was as vigorous as ever, and his iron will kept up a frame that had hardly even yet begun to give way.

During the course of the campaign he travelled throughout the State, going in all twelve hundred miles, and making forty speeches, each one of two or three hours' length. This was a remarkable feat for so old a man; indeed, it has very rarely been paralleled, except by Gladstone's recent performances. The vote was quite evenly divided between the three candidates; but Benton came in third, and the extreme proslavery men carried the day. After this, during the few months of life he yet had left, he did not again mingle in the politics of Missouri.

But in the days of his defeat at home, the regard and respect in which he was held in the other States, especially at the North, increased steadily; and in the fall of 1856 he made by request a lecturing tour in New England, speaking on the danger of the political situation and the imperative necessity of preserving the Union, which he now clearly saw to be gravely threatened. He was well received, for the North was learning to respect him, and he had gotten over his early hostility to New England—a hostility originally shared by the whole West. The New Englanders were not yet aware, however, of the importance of the secession movements, and paid little heed to the warnings that were to be so fully justified by the events of the next few years. But Benton, in spite of his great age, saw distinctly the changes that were taking place, and the dangers that were impending—an unusual thing for a man whose active life has already been lived out under widely different conditions.

He again turned his attention to literature, and produced another great work, the "Abridgment of the Debates of Congress from 1789 to 1856," in sixteen volumes, besides writing a valuable pamphlet on the

Dred Scott decision, which he severely criticised. The amount of labor all this required was immense, and his health completely gave way; yet he continued working to the very end, dictating the closing portion of the "Abridgment" in a whisper as he lay on his death-bed. When he once began to fail his advanced years made him succumb rapidly; and on April 10, 1858, he died, in the city of Washington. As soon as the news reached Missouri, a great revulsion of feeling took place, and all classes of the people united to do honor to the memory of the dead statesman, realizing that they had lost a man who towered head and shoulders above both friends and foes. The body was taken to St. Louis, and after lying in state was buried in Bellefontaine Cemetery, more than forty thousand people witnessing the funeral. All the public buildings were draped in mourning; all places of business were closed, and the flags everywhere were at half-mast. Thus at the very end the great city of the West at last again paid fit homage to the West's mightiest son.

Benton's most important writings are those mentioned above. The "Thirty Years' View" ("a history of the working of the American Government for thirty years, from 1820 to 1850") will always be indispensable to every student of American history. It deals with the deeds of both houses of Congress, and of some of the higher federal officials during his thirty years' term of service in the Senate, and is valuable alike for the original data it contains, and because it is so complete a record of our public life at that time. The book is also remarkable for its courteous and equable tone, even toward bitter personal and political enemies. It shows a vanity on the part of the author that is too frank and free from malice to be anything but amusing; the style

is rather ponderous, and the English not always good, for Benton began life, and, in fact, largely passed it, in an age of ornate periods, when grandiloquence was considered more essential than grammar. In much of the Mississippi valley the people had their own canons of literary taste; indeed, in a recent book by one of Benton's admirers, there is a fond allusion to his statement, anent the expunging resolution, that "solitary and alone" he had set the ball in motion—the pleonasm being evidently looked upon in the light of a rather fine oratorical outburst.

The "Abridgment of the Debates of Congress from 1789 to 1856" he was only able to bring down to 1850. Sixteen volumes were published. It was a compilation needing infinite labor, and is invaluable to the historian. While in the midst of the vast work he also found time to write his "Examination of the Dred Scott Case," in so far as it decided the Missouri Compromise law to be unconstitutional, and asserted the self-extension of the Constitution into the Territories, carrying slavery with it—the decision in this case promulgated by Judge Taney, of unhappy fame, having been the last step taken in the interests of slavery and for the overthrow of freedom. The pamphlet contained nearly two hundred pages, and showed, as was invariably the case with anything Benton did, the effects of laborious research and wide historical and legal learning. His summing up was, "that the decision conflicts with the uniform action of all the departments of the federal government from its foundation to the present time, and cannot be accepted as a rule to govern Congress and the people, without severing that act and admitting the political supremacy of the court and accepting an altered constitution from its hands, and taking a new and portentous

point of departure in the working of the government." He denounced the new party theories of the Democracy, which had abandoned the old belief of the founders of the Republic, that Congress had power to legislate upon slavery in Territories, and which had gone on "from the abrogation of the Missouri Compromise, which saved the Union, to squatter sovereignty, which killed the compromise, and thence to the decisions of the supreme court, which kill both." In closing he touched briefly on the history of the proslavery agitation. "Up to Mr. Pierce's administration the plan had been defensive, that is to say, to make the secession of the South a measure of self-defense against the abolition encroachments and crusades of the North. In the time of Mr. Pierce the plan became offensive, that is to say, to commence the expansion of slavery, and the acquisition of territory to spread it over, so as to overpower the North with new Slave States, and drive them out of the Union. . . . The rising in the Free States, in consequence of the abrogation of the Missouri Compromise, checked these schemes, and limited the success of the disunionists to the revival of the agitation which enables them to wield the South against the North in all the federal elections and all federal legislation. Accidents and events have given the party a strange pre-eminence,—under Jackson's administration proclaimed for treason; since at the head of the government and of the Democratic party. The death of Harrison, and the accession of Tyler, was their first great lift; the election of Mr. Pierce was their culminating point." This was the last protest of the last of the old Jacksonian leaders against that new generation of Democrats, whose delight it had become to bow down to strange gods.

In his private life Benton's relations were of the

pleasantest. He was a religious man, although, like his great political chief, he could on occasions swear roundly. He was rigidly moral, and he was too fond of work ever to make social life a business. But he liked small dinners, with just a few intimate friends or noted and brilliant public men, and always shone at such an entertainment. Although he had not travelled much, he gave the impression of having done so, by reason of his wide reading, and because he always made a point of knowing all explorers, especially those who had penetrated our great Western wilds. His geographical knowledge was wonderful; and his good nature, as well as his delight in work for work's sake, made him of more use than any library of reference, if his friends needed information upon some abstruse matter—Webster himself acknowledging his indebtedness to him on one occasion, and being the authority for the statement that Benton knew more political facts than any other man he had ever met, even than John Quincy Adams, and possessed a wonderful fund of general knowledge. Although very gentle in his dealings with those for whom he cared, Benton originally was rather quarrelsome and revengeful in character. His personal and political prejudices were bitter, and he denounced his enemies freely in public and from the stump; yet he always declined to take part in joint political debates, on account of the personal discourtesy with which they were usually conducted. He gave his whole time to public life, rarely or never attending to his law practice after he had fairly entered the political field.

Benton was one of those who were present and escaped death at the time of the terrible accident on board the *Princeton*, during Tyler's administration, when the bursting of her great gun killed so many prominent men.

Benton was saved owing to the fact that, characteristically enough, he had stepped to one side the better to note the marksmanship of the gunner. Ex-Governor Gilmer, of Virginia, who had taken his place, was instantly killed. Tyler, who was also on board, was likewise saved in consequence of the exhibition of a characteristic trait; for, just as the gun was about to be fired, something occurred in another part of the ship which distracted the attention of the fussy, fidgety President, who accordingly ran off to see what it was, and thus escaped the fatal explosion. The tragic nature of the accident and his own narrow escape made a deep impression upon Benton; and it was noticed that ever afterward he was far more forbearing and forgiving than of old. He became good friends with Webster and other political opponents, with whom he had formerly hardly been on speaking terms. Calhoun alone he would never forgive. It was not in his nature to do anything by halves; and accordingly, when he once forgave an opponent, he could not do enough to show him that the forgiveness was real. A Missourian named Wilson, who had been his bitter and malignant political foe for years, finally becoming broken in fortune and desirous of bettering himself by going to California, where Benton's influence, through his son-in-law, Fremont, was supreme, was persuaded by Webster to throw himself on the generosity of his old enemy. The latter not only met him half-way, but helped him with a lavish kindness that would hardly have been warranted by less than a lifelong friendship. Webster has left on record the fact that, when once they had come to be on good terms with each other, there was no man in the whole Senate of whom he would more freely have asked any favor that could properly be granted.

He was a most loving father. At his death he left four surviving daughters—Mrs. William Carey Jones, Mrs. Sarah Benton Jacobs, Madame Susan Benton Boilleau, and Mrs. Jessie Ann Benton Fremont, the wife of the great explorer, whose wonderful feats and adventures, ending with the conquest of California, where he became a sort of viceroy in point of power, made him an especial favorite with his father-in-law, who loved daring and hardihood. Benton took the keenest delight in Fremont's remarkable successes, and was never tired of talking of them, both within and without the Senate. He records with very natural pride the fact that it was only the courage and judgment displayed in a trying crisis by his own gifted daughter, Fremont's wife, which enabled the adventurous young explorer to prosecute one of the most important of his expeditions, when threatened with fatal interference from jealous governmental superiors.

He was an exceptionally devoted husband. His wife was Miss Elizabeth McDowell, of Virginia, whom he married after he had entered the Senate. Their life was most happy until 1844, when she was struck by paralysis. From that time till her death in 1854, he never went out to a public place of amusement, spending all his time not occupied with public duties in writing by her bedside. It is scant praise to say that, while mere acquiescence on his part would have enabled him to become rich through government influence, he nevertheless died a poor man. In public, as in private, life he was a man of sensitive purity of character; he would never permit any person connected with him by blood or marriage to accept office under the government, nor would he ever favor any applicant for a government contract on political grounds.

During his last years, when his sturdy independence and devotion to the Union had caused him the loss of his political influence in his own State and with his own party, he nevertheless stood higher with the country at large than ever before. He was a faithful friend and a bitter foe; he was vain, proud, utterly fearless, and quite unable to comprehend such emotions as are expressed by the terms despondency and yielding. Without being a great orator or writer, or even an original thinker, he yet possessed marked ability; and his abounding vitality and marvellous memory, his indomitable energy and industry, and his tenacious persistency and personal courage, all combined to give him a position and influence such as few American statesmen have ever held. His character grew steadily to the very last; he made better speeches and was better able to face new problems when past threescore and ten than in his early youth or middle age. He possessed a rich fund of political, legal, and historical learning, and every subject that he ever handled showed the traces of careful and thorough study. He was very courteous. except when provoked; his courage was proof against all fear, and he shrank from no contest, personal or political. He was sometimes narrow-minded, and always wilful and passionate; but he was honest and truthful. At all times and in all places he held every good gift he had completely at the service of the American Federal Union.

GOUVERNEUR MORRIS

BIBLIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

GOUVERNEUR MORRIS. By Theodore Roosevelt. Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin Company. The Riverside Press, Cambridge, 1888.

x, 370 *pp.*, 12*mo*, *blue cloth.*

This volume was specially written for the "American Statesmen" series and did not appear in magazine form. It has been frequently reprinted. A large-paper illustrated edition, limited to five hundred copies, none of which were sold except as part of the complete series, appeared in 1898–1899. The edition contained a new preface by the author, dated at Washington, April, 1898.

PREFACE

Gouverneur Morris, like his far greater friend and political associate, Alexander Hamilton, had about him that "touch of the purple" which is always so strongly attractive. He was too unstable and erratic to leave a profound mark upon our political developments, but he performed two or three conspicuous feats, he rendered several marked services to the country, and he embodied to a peculiar degree both the qualities which made the Federalist party so brilliant and so useful, and those other qualities which finally brought about its downfall. Hamilton and even Jay represented better what was highest in the Federalist party. Gouverneur Morris stood for its weakness as well as for its strength. Able, fearless, and cultivated, deeply devoted to his people, and of much too tough fibre ever to be misled into losing his affection for things American because of American faults and shortcomings, as was and is the case with weaker natures, he was able to render distinguished service to his country. Other American ministers have been greater and more successful diplomats than Morris was; but no one has better represented those qualities of generous daring and lofty disinterestedness which we like to associate with the name American, than did the minister who, alone among the foreign ministers, kept his residence in Paris through the "Terror." He stood for order. He stood for the honest payment of debts. Unlike many of his colleagues, he was a polished man of the world, whose comments on men and things showed that curious in-

sight and power of observation which come only when to natural ability there is added special training. But he distrusted the mass of the people, and especially the mass of the people in other sections of the country than his own, who had not the habits of refinement and the ways of looking at life which he and his associates possessed; and thus it happened that, when the Federalists sank into a secessionist faction, the name of Gouverneur Morris was associated with the names of the others who at that time lacked the power, but not the will, to split a great nation into a chaos of feeble and quarrelsome little States.

THEODORE ROOSEVELT.

WASHINGTON,
April, 1898.

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GOUVERNEUR MORRIS

CHAPTER I

HIS YOUTH: COLONIAL NEW YORK

When on January 31, 1752, Gouverneur Morris was born in the family manor-house at Morrisania, on the lands where his forefathers had dwelt for three generations, New York colony contained only some eighty thousand inhabitants, of whom twelve thousand were blacks. New York City was a thriving little trading town, whose people in summer suffered much from the mosquitoes that came back with the cows when they were driven home at nightfall for milking; while from among the locusts and water-beeches that lined the pleasant, quiet streets, the tree-frogs sang so shrilly through the long, hot evenings that a man in speaking could hardly make himself heard.

Gouverneur Morris belonged by birth to that powerful landed aristocracy whose rule was known by New York alone among all the northern colonies. His great-grandfather, who had served in the Cromwellian armies, came to the seaport at the mouth of the Hudson, while it was still beneath the sway of Holland, and settled outside of Haerlem, the estate being invested with manorial privileges by the original grant of the governor. In the next two generations the Morrises had played a prominent part in colonial affairs, both the father and grandfather of Gouverneur having been on the bench, and having also been members of the provincial legislature, where they took the popular side, and stood up stoutly for the rights of the Assembly in the wearisome

and interminable conflicts waged by the latter against the prerogatives of the Crown and the powers of the royal governors. The Morrises were restless, adventurous men, of erratic temper and strong intellect; and, with far more than his share of the family talent and brilliancy, young Gouverneur also inherited a certain whimsical streak that ran through his character. His mother was one of the Huguenot Gouverneurs, who had been settled in New York since the revocation of the Edict of Nantes; and it was perhaps the French blood in his veins that gave him the alert vivacity and keen sense of humor that distinguished him from most of the great Revolutionary statesmen who were his contemporaries.

He was a bright, active boy, fond of shooting and outdoor sports, and was early put to school at the old Huguenot settlement of New Rochelle, where the church service was still sometimes held in French; and he there learned to speak and write this language almost as well as he could English. Thence, after the usual preparatory instruction, he went to King's College—now, with altered name and spirit, Columbia—in New York.

The years of his childhood were stirring ones for the colonies; for England was then waging the greatest and most successful of her Colonial contests with France and Spain for the possession of eastern North America. Such contests, with their usual savage accompaniments in the way of Indian warfare, always fell with especial weight on New York, whose borderlands were not only claimed, but even held by the French, and within whose boundaries lay the great confederacy of the Six Nations, the most crafty, warlike, and formidable of all the native races, infinitely more to be dreaded than the Algonquin tribes with whom the other colonies had to

deal. Nor was this war any exception to the rule; for battle after battle was fought on our soil, from the day when, unassisted, the purely Colonial troops of New York and New England at Lake George destroyed Baron Dieskau's mixed host of French regulars, Canadian militia, and Indian allies, to that still more bloody day when, on the shores of Lake Champlain, Abercrombie's great army of British and Americans recoiled before the fiery genius of Montcalm.

When once the war was ended by the complete and final overthrow of the French power, and the definite establishment of English supremacy along the whole Atlantic seaboard, the bickering which was always going on between Great Britain and her American subjects, and which was but partially suppressed even when they were forced to join in common efforts to destroy a common foe, broke out far more fiercely than ever. While the colonists were still reaping the aftermath of the contest in the shape of desolating border warfare against those Indian tribes who had joined in the famous conspiracy of Pontiac, the Royal Parliament passed the Stamp Act, and thereby began the struggle that ended in the Revolution.

England's treatment of her American subjects was thoroughly selfish; but that her conduct toward them was a wonder of tyranny will not now be seriously asserted; on the contrary, she stood decidedly above the general European standard in such matters, and certainly treated her colonies far better than France and Spain did theirs; and she herself had undoubted grounds for complaint in, for example, the readiness of the Americans to claim military help in time of danger, together with their frank reluctance to pay for it. It was impossible that she should be so far in advance of the age

as to treat her colonists as equals; they themselves were sometimes quite as intolerant in their behavior toward men of a different race, creed, or color. The New England Puritans lacked only the power, but not the will, to behave almost as badly toward the Pennsylvania Quakers as did the Episcopalian English toward themselves. Yet granting all this, the fact remains, that in the Revolutionary War the Americans stood toward the British as the Protestant peoples stood toward the Catholic powers in the sixteenth century, as the Parliamentarians stood toward the Stuarts in the seventeenth, or as the upholders of the American Union stood toward the Confederate slaveholders in the nineteenth; that is, they warred victoriously for the right in a struggle whose outcome vitally affected the welfare of the whole human race. They settled, once for all, that thereafter the people of English stock should spread at will over the world's waste spaces, keeping all their old liberties and winning new ones; and they took the first and longest step in establishing the great principle that thenceforth those Europeans, who by their strength and daring founded new states abroad, should be deemed to have done so for their own profit as freemen, and not for the benefit of their more timid, lazy, or contented brethren who stayed behind.

The rulers of Great Britain, and to a large extent its people, looked upon the American colonies as existing primarily for the good of the mother country: they put the harshest restrictions on American trade in the interests of British merchants; they discouraged the spread of the Americans westward; and they claimed the right to decide for both parties the proportions in which they should pay their shares of the common burdens. The English and Americans were not the sub-

jects of a common sovereign; for the English were themselves the sovereigns, the Americans were the subjects. Whether their yoke bore heavily or bore lightly, whether it galled or not, mattered little; it was enough that it was a yoke to warrant a proud, free people in throwing it off. We could not thankfully take as a boon part only of what we felt to be our lawful due. "We do not claim liberty as a privilege, but challenge it as a right," said the men of New York, through their legislature, in 1764; and all Americans felt with them.

Yet, for all this, the feeling of loyalty was strong and hard to overcome throughout the provinces, and especially in New York. The Assembly wrangled with the royal governor; the merchants and shipmasters combined to evade the intolerable harshness of the laws of trade that tried to make them customers of England only; the householders bitterly resented the attempts to quarter troops upon them; while the soldiers of the garrison were from time to time involved in brawls with the lower ranks of the people, especially the sailors, as the seafaring population was large, and much given to forcibly releasing men taken by the press-gang for the British war-ships; but in spite of everything there was a genuine sentiment of affection and respect for the British Crown and kingdom. It is perfectly possible that if British statesmen had shown less crass and brutal stupidity, if they had shown even the wise negligence of Walpole, this feeling of loyalty would have been strong enough to keep England and America united until they had learned how to accommodate themselves to the rapidly changing conditions; but the chance was lost when once a prince like George the Third came to the throne. It has been the fashion to represent this king as a well-meaning though dull person, whose good mor-

als and excellent intentions partially atoned for his mistakes of judgment; but such a view is curiously false. His private life, it is true, showed the very admirable but commonplace virtues, as well as the appalling intellectual littleness, barrenness, and stagnation, of the average British greengrocer; but in his public career, instead of rising to the level of harmless and unimportant mediocrity usually reached by the sovereigns of the House of Hanover, he fairly rivalled the Stuarts in his perfidy, wrong-headedness, political debauchery, and attempts to destroy free government, and to replace it by a system of personal despotism. It needed all the successive blunders both of himself and of his Tory ministers to reduce the loyal party in New York to a minority, by driving the moderate men into the patriotic or American camp; and even then the loyalist minority remained large enough to be a formidable power, and to plunge the embryonic State into a ferocious civil war, carried on, as in the Carolinas and Georgia, with even more bitterness than the contest against the British.

The nature of this loyalist party and the strength of the conflicting elements can only be understood after a glance at the many nationalities that in New York were being blended into one. The descendants of the old Dutch inhabitants were still more numerous than those of any other one race, while the French Huguenots, who, being of the same Calvinistic faith, were closely mixed with them, and had been in the land nearly as long, were also plentiful; the Scotch and Scotch or Anglo Irish, mostly Presbyterians, came next in point of numbers; the English, both of Old and New England, next; there were large bodies of Germans; and there were also settlements of Gaelic Highlanders, and some Welsh,

Scandinavians, etc. Just prior to the Revolution there were in New York City two Episcopalian churches, three Dutch Reformed, three Presbyterian (Scotch and Irish), one French, two German (one Lutheran and one Calvinistic, allied to the Dutch Reformed); as well as places of worship for the then insignificant religious bodies of the Methodists, Baptists (largely Welsh), Moravians (German), Quakers, and Jews. There was no Roman Catholic church until after the Revolution; in fact before that date there were hardly any Roman Catholics in the colonies, except in Maryland and Pennsylvania, and in New York they did not acquire any strength until after the War of 1812.

This mixture of races is very clearly shown by the ancestry of the half-dozen great men brought forth by New York during the Revolution. Of these, one, Alexander Hamilton, stands in the very first class of American statesmen; two more, John Jay and Gouverneur Morris, come close behind him; the others, Philip Schuyler, Robert Livingston, and George Clinton, were of lesser, but still of more than merely local, note. They were all born and bred on this side of the Atlantic. Hamilton's father was of Scotch, and his mother of French Huguenot, descent; Morris came on one side of English, and on the other of French Huguenot, stock; Jay, of French Huguenot blood, had a mother who was Dutch; Schuyler was purely Dutch; Livingston was Scotch on his father's, and Dutch on his mother's, side; the Clintons were of Anglo-Irish origin, but married into the old Dutch families. In the same way, it was Herkomer, of German parentage, who led the New York levies, and fell at their head in the bloody fight against the Tories and Indians at Oriskany; it was the Irishman Montgomery who died leading the New York troops against

Quebec; while yet another of the few generals allotted to New York by the Continental Congress was MacDougall, of Gaelic Scotch descent. The colony was already developing an ethnic type of its own, quite distinct from that of England. No American State of the present day, not even Wisconsin or Minnesota, shows so many and important "foreign" or non-English elements as New York, and for that matter Pennsylvania and Delaware, did a century or so ago. In fact, in New York the English element in the blood has grown greatly during the past century, owing to the enormous New England immigration that took place during its first half; and the only important addition to the race conglomerate has been made by the Celtic Irish. The New England element in New York in 1775 was small and unimportant; on Long Island, where it was largest, it was mainly Tory or neutral; in the city itself, however, it was aggressively patriotic.

Recent English writers, and some of our own as well, have foretold woe to our nation, because the blood of the Cavalier and the Roundhead is being diluted with that of "German boors and Irish cotters." The alarm is needless. As a matter of fact the majority of the people of the middle colonies at the time of the Revolution *were* the descendants of Dutch and German boors and Scotch and Irish cotters; and in a less degree the same was true of Georgia and the Carolinas. Even in New England, where the English stock was purest, there was plenty of other admixture, and two of her most distinguished Revolutionary families bore, one the Huguenot name of Bowdoin, and the other the Irish name of Sullivan. Indeed, from the very outset, from the days of Cromwell, there has been a large Irish admixture in New England. When our people began their existence as a nation, they

already differed in blood from their ancestral relatives across the Atlantic much as the latter did from their forebears beyond the German Ocean; and on the whole, the immigration since has not materially changed the race strains in our nationality; a century back we were even less homogeneous than we are now. It is no doubt true that we are in the main an offshoot of the English stem; and cousins to our kinsfolk of Britain we perhaps may be; but brothers we certainly are not.

But the process of assimilating, or as we should now say, of Americanizing, all foreign and non-English elements was going on almost as rapidly a hundred years ago as it is at present. A young Dutchman or Huguenot felt it necessary, then, to learn English, precisely as a young Scandinavian or German does now; and the churches of the former at the end of the last century were obliged to adopt English as the language for their ritual exactly as the churches of the latter do at the end of this. The most stirring, energetic, and progressive life of the colony was English; and all the young fellows of push and ambition gradually adopted this as their native language, and then refused to belong to congregations where the service was carried on in a less familiar speech. Accordingly the Dutch Reformed churches dwindled steadily, while the Episcopalian and Presbyterian swelled in the same ratio, until in 1764 the former gained a new and lasting lease of life by reluctantly adopting the prevailing tongue; though Dutch was also occasionally used until forty years later.

In fact, during the century that elapsed between the final British conquest of the colony and the Revolution, the New Yorkers—Dutch, French, German, Irish, and English—had become in the main welded into one people; they felt alike toward outsiders, having chronic

quarrels with the New England States as well as with Great Britain, and showing, indeed, but little more jealous hostility toward the latter than they did toward Connecticut and New Hampshire.

The religious differences no longer corresponded to the differences of language. Half of the adherents of the Episcopalian Church were of Dutch or Huguenot blood; the leading ministers of the Dutch Church were of Scotch parentage; and the Presbyterians included some of every race. The colonists were all growing to call themselves Englishmen; when Mayor Cruger, and a board of aldermen with names equally Dutch, signed the non-importation agreement, they prefaced it by stating that they claimed "their rights as Englishmen." But though there were no rivalries of race, there were many and bitter of class and religion, the different Protestant sects hating one another with a virulence much surpassing that with which they now regard even Catholics.

The colony was in government an aristocratic republic, its constitution modelled on that of England and similar to it; the power lay in the hands of certain old and wealthy families, Dutch and English, and there was a limited freehold suffrage. The great landed families, the Livingstons, Van Rensselaers, Schuylers, Van Cortlandts, Phillipses, Morrises, with their huge manorial estates, their riches, their absolute social pre-eminence and their unquestioned political headship, formed a proud, polished, and powerful aristocracy, deep-rooted in the soil; for over a century their sway was unbroken, save by contests between themselves or with the royal governor, and they furnished the colony with military, political, and social leaders for generation after generation. They owned numerous black slaves, and lived in

state and comfort on their broad acres, tenant-farmed, in the great, roomy manor-houses, with wainscoted walls and huge fireplaces, and round about the quaint old gardens, prim and formal with their box hedges and precise flower-beds. They answered closely to the Whig lords of England, and indeed were often connected with the ruling orders abroad by blood or marriage; as an example, Staats Long Morris, Gouverneur's elder brother, who remained a royalist, and rose to be a major-general in the British army, married the Duchess of Gordon. Some of the manors were so large that they sent representatives to the Albany legislature, to sit alongside of those from the towns and counties.

Next in importance to the great manorial lords came the rich merchants of New York; many families, like the Livingstons, the most prominent of all, had representatives in both classes. The merchants were somewhat of the type of Frobisher, Hawkins, Klaesoon, and other old English and Dutch sea-worthies, who were equally keen as fighters and traders. They were shrewd, daring, and prosperous; they were often their own shipmasters, and during the incessant wars against the French and Spaniards went into privateering ventures with even more zest and spirit than into peaceful trading. Next came the smaller landed proprietors, who also possessed considerable local influence; such was the family of the Clintons. The law, too, was beginning to take high rank as an honorable and influential profession.

Most of the gentry were Episcopalians, theirs being practically the state church, and very influential and wealthy; some belonged to the Calvinistic bodies—notably the Livingstons, who were in large part Presbyterians, while certain of their number were prominent members of the Dutch congregations. It was from

among the gentry that the little group of New York revolutionary leaders came; men of singular purity, courage, and ability, who, if they could not quite rank with the brilliant Virginians of that date, nevertheless stood close behind, alongside of the Massachusetts men and ahead of those from any other colony; that, too, it must be kept in mind, at a time when New York was inferior in wealth and population to Massachusetts, Pennsylvania, or Virginia, and little, if at all, in advance of Maryland or Connecticut. The great families also furnished the leaders of the loyalists during the war; such were the De Lanceys, whose influence around the mouth of the Hudson was second to that of none others; and the Johnsons, who, in mansions that were also castles, held half-feudal, half-barbaric sway over the valley of the upper Mohawk, where they were absolute rulers, ready and willing to wage war on their own account, relying on their numerous kinsmen, their armed negro slaves, their trained bands of Gaelic retainers, and their hosts of savage allies, drawn from among the dreaded Iroquois.

The bulk of the people were small farmers in the country, tradesmen and mechanics in the towns. They were for the most part members of some of the Calvinistic churches, the great majority of the whole population belonging to the Presbyterian and Dutch Reformed congregations. The farmers were thrifty, set in their ways, and obstinate; the townsmen thrifty also, but restless and turbulent. Both farmers and townsmen were thoroughly independent and self-respecting, and were gradually getting more and more political power. They had always stood tenaciously by their rights, from the days of the early Stuart governors, who had complained loudly of the "Dutch Republicans." But they were

narrow, jealous of each other, as well as of outsiders, and slow to act together.

The political struggles were very bitter. The great families, under whose banners they were carried on, though all intermarried, were divided by keen rivalries into opposing camps. Yet they joined in dreading too great an extension of democracy; and in return were suspected by the masses, who grumblingly followed their lead, of hostility to the popular cause. The Episcopalians, though greatly in the minority, possessed most power, and harassed in every way they dared the dissenting sects, especially the Presbyterians—for the Dutch Reformed and Huguenot churches had certain rights guaranteed them by treaty. The Episcopalian clergy were royalists to a man, and it was in their congregations that the main strength of the Tories lay, although these also contained many who became the stanchest of patriots. King's College was controlled by trustees of this faith. They were busy trying to turn it into a diminutive imitation of Oxford, and did their best to make it, in its own small way, almost as much a perverse miracle of backward and invariable wrong-headedness as was its great model. Its president, when the Revolution broke out, was a real old wine-bibbing Tory parson, devoted to every worn-out theory that inculcated humble obedience to church and crown; and he was most summarily expelled by the mob.

Some important political consequences arose from the fact that the mass of the people belonged to some one or other of the branches of the Calvinistic faith—of all faiths the most republican in its tendencies. They were strongly inclined to put their republican principles into practice as well in State as in Church; they tended toward hostility to the Crown, and were strenuous in

their opposition to the extension of the Episcopal power, always threatened by some English statesmen; their cry was against "the King and the Bishops." It is worth noting that the Episcopalian churches were shut up when the Revolution broke out, and were reopened when the British troops occupied the city. The Calvinistic churches, on the contrary, which sided with the revolutionists, were shut when the British came into New York, were plundered by the troops, and were not reopened until after the evacuation.

Thus three parties developed, although the third, destined to overwhelm the others, had not yet come to the front. The first consisted of the royalists, or monarchists, the men who believed that power came from above, from the king and the bishops, and who were aristocratic in their sympathies; who were Americans only secondarily, and who stood by their order against their country. This party contained many of the great manorial families and also of the merchants; and in certain places, as in Staten Island, the east end of Long Island, the upper valley of the Mohawk, and part of Westchester County, the influence of the upper classes combined with the jealousy and ignorance of large sections of the lower to give it a clear majority of the whole population. The second party was headed by the great families of Whig or liberal sympathies, who, when the split came, stood by their country, although only very moderate republicans; and it held also in its ranks the mass of moderate men, who wished freedom, were resolute in defense of their rights, and had republican leanings, but who also appreciated the good in the system under which they were living. Finally came the extremists, the men of strong republican tendencies, whose delight it was to toast Pym, Hampden, and the regicides. These were

led by the agitators in the towns, and were energetic and active, but were unable to effect anything until the blunders of the British ministers threw the moderate men over to their side. They furnished none of the greater revolutionary leaders in New York, though the Clintons came near the line that divided them from the second party.

The last political contest carried on under the Crown occurred in 1768, the year in which Morris graduated from college, when the last Colonial legislature was elected. It reminds us of our own days when we read of the fears entertained of the solid German vote, and of the hostility to the Irish, who were hated and sneered at as "beggars" by the English party and the rich Episcopalians. The Irish of those days, however, were Presbyterians, and in blood more English than Gaelic. St. Patrick's Day was celebrated then as now, by public processions, as well as otherwise; but when, for instance, on March 17, 1766, the Irish residents of New York celebrated the day by a dinner, they gave certain toasts that would sound strangely in the ears of Milesian patriots of the present time, for they included "The Protestant Interest," and "King William, of glorious, pious, and immortal memory."

The royalist or conservative side in this contest in 1768 was led by the De Lanceys, their main support being drawn from among the Episcopalians, and most of the larger merchants helping them. The Whigs, including those with republican leanings, followed the Livingstons, and were drawn mainly from the Presbyterian and other Calvinistic congregations. The moderate men on this occasion went with the De Lanceys, and gave them the victory. In consequence the Colonial legislature was conservative and loyal in tone, and anti-

republican, although not ultra-Tory, as a whole; and thus when the Revolutionary outbreak began it went much slower than was satisfactory to the patriot party, and its actions were finally set aside by the people.

When Morris graduated from college, as mentioned above, he was not yet seventeen years old. His college career was like that of any other bright, quick boy, without overmuch industry or a passion for learning. For mathematics he possessed a genuine taste; he was particularly fond of Shakespeare; and even thus early he showed great skill in discussion and much power of argument. He made the oration, or graduating address, of his class, choosing for the subject "Wit and Beauty"; it was by no means a noteworthy effort, and was couched in the dreadful Johnsonian English of the period. A little later, when he took his master's degree, he again delivered an oration—this time on "Love." In point of style this second speech was as bad as the first, disfigured by cumbrous Latinisms and a hopeless use of the superlative; but there were one or two good ideas in it.

As soon as he graduated, he set to work to study law, deciding on this profession at once as being best suited for an active, hopeful, ambitious young man of his social standing and small fortune, who was perfectly self-confident and conscious of his own powers. He soon became interested in his studies, and followed them with great patience, working hard and mastering both principles and details with ease. He was licensed to practise as an attorney in 1771, just three years after another young man, destined to stand as his equal in the list of New York's four or five noted statesmen, John Jay, had likewise been admitted to the bar; and among the very few cases in which Morris was engaged of which the record has been kept is one concerning a contested election,

in which he was pitted against Jay, and bore himself well.

Before this, and while not yet of age, he had already begun to play a part in public affairs. The colony had been run in debt during the French and Indian wars, and a bill was brought forward in the New York Assembly to provide for this by raising money through the issue of interest-bearing bills of credit. The people, individually, were largely in debt, and hailed the proposal with much satisfaction, on the theory that it would "make money more plenty"; our Revolutionary forefathers being unfortunately not much wiser or more honest in their ways of looking at the public finances than we ourselves, in spite of our state repudiators, national greenbackers, and dishonest silver men.

Morris attacked the bill very forcibly, and with good effect, opposing any issue of paper money, which could bring no absolute relief, but merely a worse catastrophe of bankruptcy in the end; he pointed out that it was nothing but a mischievous pretense for putting off the date of a payment that would have to be met anyhow, and that ought rather to be met at once with honest money gathered from the resources of the province. He showed the bad effects such a system of artificial credit would have on private individuals, the farmers and tradesmen, by encouraging them to speculate and go deeper into debt; and he criticised unsparingly the attitude of the majority of his fellow citizens in wishing such a measure of relief, not only for their short-sighted folly, but also for their criminal and selfish dishonesty in trying to procure a temporary benefit for themselves at the lasting expense of the community; finally he strongly advised them to bear with patience small evils in the present rather than to remedy them by inflicting infinitely

greater ones on themselves and their descendants in the future.

At the law he did very well, having the advantages of his family name, and of his own fine personal appearance. He was utterly devoid of embarrassment, and his perfect self-assurance and freedom from any timidity or sense of inferiority left his manner without the least tinge of awkwardness, and gave clear ground for his talents and ambition to make their mark.

However, hard-working and devoted to his profession though he was, he had the true family restlessness and craving for excitement, and soon after he was admitted to the bar he began to long for foreign travel, as was natural enough in a young provincial gentleman of his breeding and education. In a letter to an old friend (William Smith, a man of learning, the historian of the colony, and afterward its chief justice), in whose office he had studied law, he asks advice in the matter, and gives as his reasons for wishing to make the trip the desire "to form my manners and address by the example of the truly polite, to rub off in the gay circle a few of the many barbarisms which characterize a provincial education, and to curb the vain self-sufficiency which arises from comparing ourselves with companions who are inferior to us." He then anticipates the objections that may be made on the score of the temptations to which he will be exposed by saying: "If it be allowed that I have a *taste* for pleasure, it may naturally follow that I shall avoid those low pleasures which abound on this as well as on the other side of the Atlantic. As for these poignant joys which are the lot of the affluent, like Tantalus I may grasp at them, but they will certainly be out of my reach." In this last sentence he touches on his narrow means; and it was on this point

that his old preceptor harped in making his reply, cunningly instilling into his mind the danger of neglecting his business, and bringing up the appalling example of an "Uncle Robin," who, having made three pleasure-trips to England, "began to figure with thirty thousand pounds, and did not leave five thousand"; going on: "What! 'Virtus post nummos? Curse on inglorious wealth?' Spare your indignation. I, too, detest the ignorant miser; but both virtue and ambition abhor poverty, or they are mad. Rather imitate your grandfather (who had stayed in America and prospered) than your uncle."

The advice may have had its effect; at any rate Morris stayed at home, and, with an occasional trip to Philadelphia, got all he could out of the society of New York, which, little provincial seaport though it was, was yet a gay place, gayer than any other American city save Charleston, the society consisting of the higher Crown officials, the rich merchants, and the great landed proprietors. Into this society Morris, a handsome, high-bred young fellow, of easy manners and far from puritanical morals, plunged with a will, his caustic wit and rather brusque self-assertion making him both admired and feared. He enjoyed it all to the full, and in his bright, chatty letters to his friends pictures himself as working hard, but gay enough also: "Up all night—balls, concerts, assemblies—all of us mad in the pursuit of pleasure."

But the Revolution was at hand, and both pleasure and office work had to give way to something more important.

CHAPTER II

THE OUTBREAK OF THE REVOLUTION: MORRIS IN THE PROVINCIAL CONGRESS

During the years immediately preceding the outbreak of the Revolution, almost all people were utterly in the dark as to what their future conduct should be. No responsible leader thought seriously of separation from the mother country, and the bulk of the population were still further from supposing such an event to be possible. Indeed it must be remembered that all through the Revolutionary War not only was there a minority actively favorable to the royal cause, but there was also a minority—so large that, added to the preceding it has been doubted whether it was not a majority—that was but lukewarm in its devotion to the American side, and was kept even moderately patriotic almost as much by the excesses of the British troops and blunders of the British generals and ministers as by the valor of our own soldiers, or the skill of our own statesmen. We can now see clearly that the right of the matter was with the patriotic party; and it was a great thing for the whole English-speaking race that that section of it which was destined to be the most numerous and powerful should not be cramped and fettered by the peculiarly galling shackles of provincial dependency; but all this was not by any means so clear then as now, and some of our best citizens thought themselves in honor bound to take the opposite side—though of necessity those among our most high-minded

men, who were also far-sighted enough to see the true nature of the struggle, went with the patriots.

That the loyalists of 1776 were wrong is beyond question; but it is equally beyond question that they had greater grounds for believing themselves right than had the men who tried to break up the Union three-quarters of a century later. That these latter had the most hearty faith in the justice of their cause need not be doubted; and he is but a poor American whose veins do not thrill with pride as he reads of the deeds of desperate prowess done by the Confederate armies; but it is most unfair to brand the "Tory" of 1776 with a shame no longer felt to pertain to the "rebel" of 1860. Still, there is no doubt, not only that the patriots were right, but also that they were as a whole superior to the Tories; they were the men with a high ideal of freedom, too fond of liberty, and too self-respecting, to submit to foreign rule; they included the mass of hard-working, orderly, and yet high-spirited yeomen and freeholders. The Tories included those of the gentry who were devoted to aristocratic principles; the large class of timid and prosperous people (like the Pennsylvania Quakers); the many who feared above all things disorder; also the very lowest sections of the community, the lazy, thriftless, and vicious, who hated their progressive neighbors, as in the Carolinas; and finally the men who were really principled in favor of a kingly government.

Morris was at first no more sure of his soundings than were the rest of his companions. He was a gentleman of old family, and belonged to the ruling Episcopalian Church. He was no friend to tyranny, and he was a thorough American, but he had little faith in extreme democracy. The Revolution had two sides; in the northern Atlantic States at least it was almost as

much an uprising of democracy against aristocracy as it was a contest between America and England; and the patriotic Americans, who nevertheless distrusted ultrademocratic ideas, suffered many misgivings when they let their love for their country overcome their pride of caste. The "Sons of Liberty," a semisecret society originating among the merchants, and very powerful in bringing discontent to a head, now showed signs of degenerating into a mob; and for mobs Morris, like other clear-headed men, felt the most profound dislike and contempt.

Throughout 1774 he took little part in the various commotions, which kept getting more and more violent. He was angered by the English encroachments, and yet was by no means pleased with the measures taken to repel them. The gentry, and the moderate men generally, were at their wits' ends in trying to lead the rest of the people, and were being pushed on farther and farther all the time; the leadership, even of the Revolutionary party, still rested in their hands; but it grew continually less absolute. Said Morris: "The spirit of the English Constitution has yet a little influence left, and but a little. The remains of it, however, will give the wealthy people a superiority this time; but, would they secure it, they must banish all schoolmasters and confine all knowledge to themselves. . . . The gentry begin to fear this. Their committee will be appointed; they will deceive the people, and again forfeit a share of their confidence. And if these instances of what with one side is policy, with the other perfidy, shall continue to increase and become more frequent, farewell, aristocracy. I see, and see it with fear and trembling, that if the dispute with Britain continues, we shall be under the worst of all pos-

sible dominions; we shall be under the dominion of a riotous mob. It is the interest of all men, therefore, to seek for reunion with the parent state." He then goes on to discuss the terms which will make this reunion possible, and evidently draws ideas from sources as diverse as Rousseau and Pitt, stating, as preliminaries, that when men come together in society, there must be an implied contract that "a part of their freedom shall be given up for the security of the remainder. But what part? The answer is plain. The least possible, considering the circumstances of the society, which constitute what may be called its political necessity"; and again, "In every society the members have a right to the utmost liberty that can be enjoyed consistent with the general safety"; while he proposes the rather wild remedy of divorcing the taxing and the governing powers, giving America the right to lay her own imposts, and regulate her internal police, and reserving to Great Britain that to regulate the trade for the entire empire.

Naturally there was no hope of any compromise of this sort. The British ministry grew more imperious, and the colonies more defiant. At last the clash came, and then Morris's thorough Americanism and inborn love of freedom and impatience of tyranny overcame any lingering class jealousy, and he cast in his lot with his countrymen. Once in, he was not of the stuff to waver or look back; but like most other Americans, and like almost all New Yorkers, he could not for some little time realize how hopeless it was to try to close the breach with Great Britain. Hostilities had gone on for quite a while before even Washington could bring himself to believe that a lasting separation was inevitable.

The Assembly, elected, as shown in the previous chapter, at a moment of reaction, was royalist in tone. It

contained several stanch patriots, but the majority, although unwilling to back up the British ministers in all their doings, were still more hostile to the growing body of republican revolutionists. They gradually grew wholly out of sympathy with the people; until the latter at last gave up all attempts to act through their ordinary representatives, and set about electing delegates who should prove more faithful. Thereupon, in April, 1775, the last colonial legislature adjourned for all time, and was replaced by successive bodies more in touch with the general sentiment of New York; that is, by various committees, by a convention to elect delegates to the Continental Congress and then by the Provincial Congress. The lists of names in these bodies show not only how many leading men certain families contributed, but also how mixed the lineage of such families was; for among the numerous Jays, Livingstons, Ludlows, Van Cortlandts, Roosevelts, Beekmans, and others of Dutch, English, and Huguenot ancestry, appear names as distinctly German, Gaelic-Scotch, and Irish, like Hoffman, Mulligan, MacDougall, Connor.*

* The habit of constantly importing indentured Irish servants, as well as German laborers, under contract, prevailed throughout the colonies; and the number of men thus imported was quite sufficient to form a considerable element in the population, and to add a new, although perhaps not very valuable, strain to our already mixed blood. In taking up at random the file of the New York *Gazette* for 1766, we find among the advertisements many offering rewards for runaway servants; such as "three pounds for the runaway servant Conner O'Rourke," "ten pounds for the runaway Irish servant, Philip Maginnis," "five pounds apiece for certain runaway German miners—Bruderlein, Baum, Ostmann, etc.—imported under contract"; all this mixed in with advertisements of rewards of about the same money value for "the mulatto man named Tom," or the "negroes Nero and Pompey." Still, in speaking of the Revolutionary armies, the word "Irish" must almost always be understood as meaning Presbyterian Irish; the Catholic Irish had but little hand in the war, and that little was limited to furnishing soldiers to some of the British regiments. The Presbyterian Irish, however, in the Revolutionary armies, played a part as manful and valiant as, and even more important than, that taken by the Catholic Irish soldiers who served so bravely during the great contest between the North and South. The few free Catholic Irish already in America in 1776 were for the most part heartily loyal; but they were not numerous enough to be of the least consequence.

To the Provincial Congress, from thenceforth on the regular governmental body of the colony, eighty-one delegates were elected, including Gouverneur Morris from the county of Westchester, and seventy were present at the first meeting, which took place on May 22d at New York. The voting in the Congress was done by counties, each being allotted a certain number of votes roughly approximating to its population.

Lexington had been fought, and the war had already begun in Massachusetts; but in New York, though it was ablaze with sympathy for the insurgent New Englanders, the royal authority was still nominally unquestioned, and there had been no collision with the British troops. Few, if any, of the people of the colony as yet aimed at more than a redress of their grievances and the restoration of their rights and liberties; they had still no idea of cutting loose from Great Britain. Even such an avowedly popular and revolutionary body as the Provincial Congress contained some few out-and-out Tories and very many representatives of that timid, wavering class which always halts midway in any course of action, and is ever prone to adopt half-measures—a class which in any crisis works quite as much harm as the actively vicious, and is almost as much hated and even more despised by the energetic men of strong convictions. The timid good are never an element of strength in a community; but they have always been well represented in New York. During the Revolutionary War, it is not probable that much more than half of her people were ever in really hearty and active sympathy with the patriots.

Morris at once took a prominent place in the Congress, and he showed the national bent of his mind when he seconded a resolution to the effect that implicit obe-

dience ought to be rendered to the Continental Congress in all matters pertaining to the general regulation of the associated colonies. The Assembly, however, was by no means certain how far it would be well to go; and the majority declined either to approve or disapprove of the proceedings of the late Continental Congress. They agreed to subscribe to the association, and recommended the same course to their constituents, but added that they did not believe the latter should be forced to do so.

Still, with all their doubting and faint-heartedness, they did set about preparing for resistance, and for at least the possibility of concerted action with the other colonies. The first step, of course, was to provide for raising funds; this was considered by a committee of which Morris was a member, and he prepared and drew up their report. In the state of public feeling, which was nearly a unit against "taxation without representation" abroad, but was the reverse of unanimous as to submitting even to taxation with representation at home, it was impossible to raise money by the ordinary method; indeed, though the mass of active patriots were willing to sacrifice much, perhaps all, for the cause, yet there were quite as many citizens whose patriotism was lukewarm enough already, and could not stand any additional chilling. Such people are always willing to face what may be called a staved-off sacrifice, however; and promises to pay in the future what they can, but will not pay in the present, come under this head. Besides, there would have been other difficulties in the way, and in fact it was impossible to raise the amount needed by direct taxation. Accordingly Morris, in his report on behalf of the committee, recommended an issue of paper money, and advised that this should not

be done by the colony itself, but that the Continental Congress should strike the whole sum needed, and apportion the several shares to the different colonies, each of them being bound to discharge its own particular part, and all together to be liable for whatever any particular colony was unable to pay. This plan secured a wide credit and circulation to the currency, and, what was equally desirable, created throughout the colonies a common interest and common responsibility on a most important point, and greatly strengthened the bonds of their union. Morris even thus early showed the breadth of his far-seeing patriotism; he was emphatically an American first, a New Yorker next; the whole tone of his mind was thoroughly national. He took the chief part in urging the adoption of the report, and made a most telling speech in its favor before the Assembly, a mixed audience of the prominent men of the colony being also present. The report was adopted and forwarded to the Continental Congress; Morris was felt on all sides to have already taken his place among the leaders, and from thenceforth he was placed on almost every important committee of the Provincial Congress.

This body kept on its course, corresponding with the other colonies, exchanging thinly veiled threats with the Johnsons, the powerful Tory overlords of the upper Mohawk, and preparing rather feebly for defense, being hampered by a total lack of funds or credit until the Continental currency was coined. But they especially busied themselves with a plan of reconciliation with England; and in fact were so very cautious and moderate as to be reproached by their chosen agent in England, Edmund Burke, for their "scrupulous timidity." The Congress, by the way, showed some symptoms of an advance in toleration, at least so far as the Protestant

sects went; for it was opened and closed by ministers of the Episcopalian, Dutch Reformed, Presbyterian, Baptist, and other sects, each in turn; but, as will shortly be seen, the feeling against Catholics was quite as narrow-minded and intense as ever. This was natural enough in colonial days, when Protestantism and national patriotism were almost interchangeable terms; for the hereditary and embittered foes of the Americans, the French and Spaniards, were all Catholics, and even many of the Indians were of the same faith; and undoubtedly the wonderful increase in the spirit of tolerance shown after the Revolution was due in part to the change of the Catholic French into our allies, and of the Protestant English into our most active foes. It must be remembered, however, that the Catholic gentry of Maryland played the same part in the Revolution that their Protestant neighbors did. One of the famous Carroll family was among the signers of the Declaration of Independence; and, on the other hand, one of the Cliftons was a noted loyalist leader.

Morris took a prominent part, both in and out of committee, in trying to shape the plan of reconciliation, although utterly disapproving of many of the ways in which the subject was handled; for he had all the contempt natural to most young men of brains, decision, and fiery temper for his timid, short-sighted, and prolix colleagues. The report was not all to his taste in the final shape in which it was adopted. It consisted of a series of articles recommending the repeal of the obnoxious statutes of the Imperial Parliament, the regulation of trade for the benefit of the whole empire, the establishment of triennial colonial legislatures, and also asserting the right of the colonies to manage their internal polity to suit themselves, and their willingness

to do their part, according to their capacities, for the general defense of the empire. The eighth article contained a denial of the right of "Great Britain, or any other earthly legislature or tribunal, to interfere in the ecclesiastical or religious concerns of the colonies," together with a "protest against the indulgence and establishment of popery all along their interior confines"; this being called forth by what was known as the "Quebec Bill," whereby the British Parliament had recently granted extraordinary powers and privileges to the Canadian clergy, with the obvious purpose of conciliating that powerful priesthood, and thereby converting—as was actually done—the recently conquered French of the St. Lawrence valley into efficient allies of the British Government against the old Protestant colonies.

This eighth article was ridiculous, and was especially objected to by Morris. In one of his vigorous, deliciously fresh, and humorous letters, dated June 30, 1775, and addressed to John Jay, then in the Continental Congress, he writes:

"The foolish religious business I opposed until I was weary; it was carried by a very small majority, and my dissent entered. . . . The article about religion is most arrant nonsense, and would do as well in a high Dutch Bible as the place it now stands in.

"I drew a long report for our committee, to which they could make no objections excepting that none of them could understand it. . . . I was pleased at the rejection, because, as I observed to you before, I think the question ought to be simplified.

"I address this letter to you, but I shall be glad [if] you will read it to Livingston, for I intend it for both of you; make my compliments to him, and tell him that I

shall write to him when I have time to write a good letter —this is a damned bad one, and would not exist, if I did not think it a duty to myself to show my friends that I had no hand in that foolish religious business. I am, as you well know, your friend, etc."

Morris did not believe in a Colonial assembly making overtures for a reconciliation, as he thought this was the province of the Continental Congress. The majority was against him, but he was a clever politician and parliamentary tactician, as well as a great statesman, and he fairly outwitted and hoodwinked his opponents, persuading them finally to adopt the report in the form of a mere expression of opinions to be sent to their congressional delegates, with a prayer that the latter would "use every effort for the compromising of this unnatural quarrel between the parent and child." In this shape it was forwarded to the delegates, who answered that they would do all in their power to compromise the quarrel, and added a postscript, written by Jay himself, to the effect that they deemed it better not to make any mention of the religious article before the Congress, as they thought it wise to bury "all disputes on ecclesiastical points, which have for ages had no other tendency than that of banishing peace and charity from the world."

While all this was pending, and though Bunker Hill had been fought, and the war was in full progress round Boston, New York yet maintained what might almost be described as an attitude of armed neutrality. The city was so exposed to the British war-ships in the bay, and the surrounding population was so doubtful, that the patriot party dared not take the deciding steps, especially as so many of its members still clung to the hope of a peaceful settlement. Morris announced frankly that he did not believe in breaking the peace until they

were prepared to take the consequences. Indeed, when the few British troops left the city to join the garrison in Boston, he strongly opposed the action of the Sons of Liberty, who gathered hastily together, and took away the cart-loads of arms and ammunition that the soldiers were taking with them. The Congress, to their honor, discouraged, to the best of their power, the rioting and mobbing of Tories in the city.

In fact, New York's position was somewhat like that of Kentucky at the outbreak of the Civil War. Her backwardness in definitely throwing in her lot with the revolutionists was clearly brought out by a rather ludicrous incident. General Washington, on his way to take command of the Continental army round Boston, passed through New York the same day the royal governor, Tryon, arrived by sea, and the authorities were cast into a great quandary as to how they should treat two such kings of Brentford when the one rose was so small. Finally they compromised by sending a guard of honor to attend each; Montgomery and Morris, as delegates from the Assembly, received Washington and brought him before that body, which addressed him in terms of cordial congratulation, but ended with a noteworthy phrase—that "when the contest should be decided by an accommodation with the mother country, he should deliver up the important deposit that had been confided to his hands."

These words give us the key to the situation. Even the patriots of the colony could not realize that there was no hope of an "accommodation"; and they were hampered at every step by the fear of the British frigates, and of the numerous Tories. The latter were very bold and defiant; when Congress tried to disarm them, they banded themselves together, bade the authorities

defiance, and plainly held the upper hand on Staten Island and in Queens County. New York furnished many excellent soldiers to the royal armies during the war, and from among her gentry came the most famous of the Tory leaders—such as Johnson and De Lancey, whose prowess was felt by the hapless people of their own native province; De Peyster, who was Ferguson's second in command at Kings Mountain; and Cruger, who, in the Carolinas, inflicted a check upon Greene himself. The Tories were helped also by the jealousy felt toward some of the other colonies, especially Connecticut, whose people took the worst possible course for the patriot side by threatening to "crush down" New York, and by finally furnishing an armed and mounted mob which rode suddenly into the city, and wrecked the office of an obnoxious loyalist printer named Rivington. This last proceeding caused great indignation, and nearly made a split in the Revolutionary camp.

New York had thus some cause for her inaction; nevertheless, her lack of boldness and decision were not creditable to her, and she laid herself open to just reproaches. Nor can Morris himself be altogether freed from the charge of having clung too long to the hope of a reconciliation and to a policy of half-measures. He was at that time chairman of a legislative committee which denounced any projected invasion of Canada (therein, however, only following the example of the Continental Congress), and refused to allow Ethan Allen to undertake one, as that adventurous partisan chieftain requested. But Morris was too clear-sighted to occupy a doubtful position long; and he now began to see things clearly as they were, and to push his slower or more timid associates forward along the path which they had set out to tread. He was instrumental in get-

ting the militia into somewhat better shape; and, as it was found impossible to get enough Continental money, a colonial paper currency was issued. In spite of the quarrel with Connecticut, a force from that province moved in to take part in the defense of New York.

Yet, in the main, the policy of the New York Congress still continued both weak and changeable, and no improvement was effected when it was dissolved and a second elected. To this body the loyalist counties of Richmond and Queens refused to return delegates, and throughout the colony affairs grew more disorderly, and the administration of justice came nearly to a standstill. Finding that the local congress seemed likely to remain unable to make up its mind how to act, the Continental leaders at last took matters into their own hands, and marched a force into New York City early in February, 1776. This had a most bracing effect upon the provincial authorities; yet they still continued to allow the British war-ships in the bay to be supplied with provisions, nor was this attitude altered until in April Washington arrived with the main Continental army. He at once insisted that a final break should be made; and about the same time the third Provincial Congress was elected. Morris, again returned for Westchester, headed the bolder spirits, who had now decided that the time had come to force their associates out of their wavering course, and to make them definitely cast in their lot with their fellow Americans. Things had come to a point which made a decision necessary; the gathering of the Continental forces on Manhattan Island and the threatening attitude of the British fleet and army made it impossible for even the most timid to keep on lingering in a state of uncertainty. So the Declaration of Independence was ratified, and a state constitution organ-

ized; then the die was cast, and thereafter New York manfully stood by the result of the throw.

The two Provincial Congresses that decided on this course held their sessions in a time of the greatest tumult, when New York was threatened hourly by the British; and long before their work was ended they had hastily to leave the city. Before describing what they did, a glance should be taken at the circumstances under which it was done.

The peaceable citizens, especially those with any property, gradually left New York; and it remained in possession of the raw levies of the Continentals, while Staten Island received Howe with open arms, and he was enabled without difficulty to disembark his great force of British and German mercenaries on Long Island. The much smaller, motley force opposed to him, unorganized, ill armed, and led by utterly inexperienced men, was beaten, with hardly an effort, in the battle that followed, and only escaped annihilation through the skill of Washington and the supine blundering of Howe. Then it was whipped up the Hudson and beyond the borders of the State, the broken remnant fleeing across New Jersey; and though the brilliant feats of arms at Trenton and Princeton enabled the Americans to reconquer the latter province, southern New York lay under the heel of the British till the close of the war.

Thus Morris, Jay, and the other New York leaders were obliged for six years to hold up their cause in a half-conquered State, a very large proportion of whose population was lukewarm or hostile. The odds were heavy against the patriots, because their worst foes were those of their own household. English writers are fond of insisting upon the alleged fact that America only won her freedom by the help of foreign nations. Such help was

certainly most important, but, on the other hand, it must be remembered that during the first and vital years of the contest the Revolutionary colonists had to struggle unaided against the British, their mercenary German and Indian allies, Tories, and even French-Canadians. When the French court declared in our favor the worst was already over; Trenton had been won, Burgoyne had been captured, and Valley Forge was a memory of the past.

We did not owe our main disasters to the might of our foes, nor our final triumph to the help of our friends. It was on our own strength that we had to rely, and it was with our own folly and weakness that we had to contend. The Revolutionary leaders can never be too highly praised; but taken in bulk the Americans of the last quarter of the eighteenth century do not compare to advantage with the Americans of the third quarter of the nineteenth. In our Civil War it was the people who pressed on the leaders, and won almost as much in spite of as because of them; but the leaders of the Revolution had to goad the rank and file into line. They were forced to contend not only with the active hostility of the Tories, but with the passive neutrality of the indifferent, and the selfishness, jealousy, and short-sightedness of the patriotic. Had the Americans of 1776 been united, and had they possessed the stubborn, unyielding tenacity and high devotion to an ideal shown by the North, or the heroic constancy and matchless valor shown by the South, in the Civil War, the British would have been driven off the continent before three years were over.

It is probable that nearly as great a proportion of our own people were actively or passively opposed to the formation of our Union originally as were in favor of its

dissolution in 1860. This was one of the main reasons why the war dragged on so long. It may be seen by the fact, among others, that when in the Carolinas and Georgia a system of relentless and undying partisan warfare not only crushed the Tories, but literally destroyed them from off the face of the earth, then the British, though still victorious in almost every pitched battle, were at once forced to abandon the field.

Another reason was the inferior military capacity of the Revolutionary armies. The Continental troops, when trained, were excellent; but in almost every battle they were mixed with more or less worthless militia; and of the soldiers thus obtained all that can be said is that their officers could never be sure that they would fight, nor their enemies that they would run away. The Revolutionary troops certainly fell short of the standard reached by the volunteers who fought Shiloh and Gettysburg. The British rarely found them to be such foes as they afterward met at New Orleans and Lundy's Lane. Throughout the Revolution the militia were invariably leaving their posts at critical times; they would grow either homesick or dejected, and would then go home at the very crisis of the campaign; they did not begin to show the stubbornness and resolution to "see the war through" so common among their descendants in the contending Federal and Confederate armies.

The truth is that in 1776 our main task was to shape new political conditions, and then to reconcile our people to them; whereas in 1860 we had merely to fight fiercely for the preservation of what was already ours. In the first emergency we needed statesmen, and in the second warriors; and the statesmen and warriors were forthcoming. A comparison of the men who came to

the front during these, the two heroic periods of the Republic, brings out this point clearly.

Washington, alike statesman, soldier, and patriot, stands alone. He was not only the greatest American; he was also one of the greatest men the world has ever known. Few centuries and few countries have ever seen his like. Among the people of English stock there is none to compare with him, unless perhaps Cromwell, utterly different though the latter was. Of Americans, Lincoln alone is worthy to stand even second.

As for our other statesmen: Franklin, Hamilton, Jefferson, Adams, and their fellows most surely stand far above Seward, Sumner, Chase, Stanton, and Stevens, great as were the services which these, and those like them, rendered. But when we come to the fighting men, all this is reversed. As a mere military man, Washington himself cannot rank with the wonderful war-chief who for four years led the army of northern Virginia; and the names of Washington and Greene fill up the short list of really good Revolutionary generals. Against these the Civil War shows a roll that contains not only Lee, but also Grant and Sherman, Jackson and Johnston, Thomas, Sheridan, and Farragut—leaders whose volunteer soldiers and sailors, at the end of their four years' service, were ready and more than able to match themselves against the best regular forces of Europe.

CHAPTER III

INDEPENDENCE: FORMING THE STATE CONSTITUTION

The third Provincial Congress, which came together in May, and before the close of its sessions was obliged to adjourn to White Plains, had to act on the Declaration of Independence, and provide for the foundation of a new State government.

Morris now put himself at the head of the patriotic party, and opened the proceedings by a long and very able speech in favor of adopting the recommendation of the Continental Congress that the colonies should form new governments. In his argument he went at length into the history and growth of the dispute with Great Britain; spoke of the efforts made in the past for reconciliation, and then showed clearly how such efforts were now not only hopeless, but also no longer compatible with the dignity and manhood of Americans. He sneered at those who argued that we ought to submit to Great Britain for the sake of the protection we got from her. "Great Britain will not fail to bring us into a war with some of her neighbors, and then protect us as a lawyer defends a suit—the client paying for it. This is quite in form, but a wise man would, I think, get rid of the suit and the lawyer together. Again, how are we to be protected? If a descent is made upon our coasts and the British navy and army are three thousand miles off, we cannot receive very great benefit from them on that occasion. If, to obviate this inconveni-

ence, we have an army and navy constantly among us, who can say that we shall not need a little protection against *them?*" He went on to point out the hopelessness of expecting Great Britain to keep to any terms which would deprive Parliament of its supremacy over America; for no succeeding Parliament could be held bound by the legislation of its predecessor, and the very acknowledgment of British supremacy on the part of the Americans would bind them as subjects, and make the supremacy of Parliament legitimate. He bade his hearers remember the maxim "that no faith is to be kept with rebels," and said: "In this case, or in any other case, if we fancy ourselves hardly dealt with, I maintain there is no redress but by arms. For it never yet was known that, when men assume power, they will part with it again, unless by compulsion."

He then took up the subject of independence; showed, for the benefit of the good but timid men who were frightened at the mere title, that, in all but name, it already existed in New York, and proved that its maintenance was essential to our well-being. "My argument, therefore, stands thus: As a connection with Great Britain cannot again exist without enslaving America, an independence is absolutely necessary. I cannot balance between the two. We run a hazard in one path, I confess; but then we are infallibly ruined if we pursue the other. . . . We find the characteristic marks and insignia of independence in this society, considered in itself and compared with other societies. The enumeration is conviction. Coining moneys, raising armies, regulating commerce, peace, war—all these things you are not only adepts in, but masters of. Treaties alone remain, and even those you have dabbled at. Georgia you put under the ban of empire, and received

her upon repentance as a member of the flock. Canada you are now treating with. France and Spain you ought to treat with, and the rest is but a name. I believe, sir, the Romans were as much governed, or rather oppressed, by their emperors, as ever any people were by their king. But emperor was more agreeable to their ears than king. [So] some, nay, many, persons in America dislike the word independence."

He then went on to show how independence would work well alike for our peace, liberty, and security. Considering the first, he laughed at the apprehensions expressed by some that the moment America was independent all the powers of Europe would pounce down on her, to parcel out the country among themselves; and showed clearly that to a European power any war of conquest in America would be "tedious, expensive, uncertain, and ruinous," and that none of the country could be kept even if it should come to pass that some little portion of it were conquered. "But I cannot think it will ever come to this. For when I turn my eyes to the means of defense, I find them amply sufficient. We have all heard that in the last war America was conquered in Germany. I hold the converse of this to be true, namely, that in and by America his majesty's German dominions were secured. . . . I expect a full and lasting defense against any and every part of the earth." After thus treating of the advantages to be hoped for on the score of peace, he turns attention "to a question of infinitely greater importance, namely, the liberty of this country"; and afterward passes to the matter of security, which, "so long as the system of laws by which we are now governed shall prevail, is amply provided for in every separate colony. There may indeed arise an objection because some gentlemen

suppose that the different colonies will carry on a sort of land piracy against one another. But how this can possibly happen when the idea of separate colonies no longer exists I cannot for my soul comprehend. That something very like this has already been done I shall not deny, but the reason is as evident as the fact. We never yet had a government in this country of sufficient energy to restrain the lawless and indigent. Whenever a form of government is established which deserves the name, these insurrections must cease. But who is the man so hardy as to affirm that they will not grow with our growth, while on every occasion we must resort to an English judicature to terminate differences which the maxims of policy will teach them to leave undetermined? By degrees we are getting beyond the utmost pale of English government. Settlements are forming to the westward of us, whose inhabitants acknowledge no authority but their own." In one sentence he showed rather a change of heart, as regarded his former aristocratic leanings; for he reproached those who were "apprehensive of losing a little consequence and importance by living in a country where all are on an equal footing," and predicted that we should "cause all nations to resort hither as an asylum from oppression."

The speech was remarkable for its incisive directness and boldness, for the exact clearness with which it portrayed things as they were, for the broad sense of American nationality that it displayed, and for the accurate forecasts that it contained as to our future course in certain particulars—such as freedom from European wars and entanglements, a strong but purely defensive foreign policy, the encouragement of the growth of the West, while keeping it united to us, and the throwing open our doors to the oppressed from abroad.

Soon after the delivery of this speech news came that the Declaration of Independence had been adopted by the Continental Congress; and Jay, one of the New York delegates to this body, and also a member of the Provincial Congress, drew up for the latter a resolution emphatically indorsing the declaration, which was at once adopted without a dissenting voice. At the same time the Provincial Congress changed its name to that of "The Convention of the Representatives of the State of New York."

These last acts were done by a body that had been elected, with increased power, to succeed the third Provincial Congress and provide for a new constitution. Just before this, Morris had been sent to the Continental Congress in Philadelphia to complain that the troops from New England were paid more largely than those from the other colonies; a wrong which was at once redressed, the wages of the latter being raised, and Morris returned to New York in triumph after only a week's absence.

The Constitutional Convention of New York led a most checkered life; for the victorious British chevied it up and down the State, hunting it in turn from every small town in which it thought to have found a peaceful haven of refuge. At last it rested in Fishkill, such an out-of-the-way place as to be free from danger. The members were obliged to go armed, so as to protect themselves from stray marauding parties; and the number of delegates in attendance alternately dwindled and swelled in a wonderful manner, now resolving themselves into a committee of safety, and again resuming their functions as members of the convention.

The most important duties of the convention were intrusted to two committees. Of the first, which was

to draft a plan for the Constitution, Morris, Jay, and Livingston were the three leading members, upon whom all the work fell; of the second, which was to devise means for the establishment of a State fund, Morris was the chairman and moving spirit.

He was also chairman of a committee which was appointed to look after the Tories, and prevent them from joining together and rising; and so numerous were they that the jails were soon choked with those of their number who, on account of their prominence or bitterness, were most obnoxious to the patriots. Also a partial system of confiscation of Tory estates was begun. So greatly were the Tories feared and hated, and so determined were the attempts to deprive them of even the shadow of a chance to do harm, by so much as a word, that the convention sent a memorial, drafted by Morris, to the Continental Congress, in which they made the very futile suggestion that it should take "some measures for expunging from the Book of Common Prayer such parts, and discontinuing in the congregations of all other denominations all such prayers, as interfere with the interests of the American cause." The resolution was not acted on; but another part of the memorial shows how the Church of England men were standing by the mother country, for it goes on to recite that "the enemies of America have taken great pains to insinuate into the minds of the Episcopalians that the church is in danger. We could wish the Congress would pass some resolve to quiet their fears, and we are confident that it would do essential service to the cause of America, at least in this State."

Morris's position in regard to the Tories was a peculiarly hard one, because among their number were many of his own relatives, including his elder brother. The

family house, where his mother resided, was within the British lines; and not only did he feel the disapproval of such of his people as were loyalists, on the one side, but, on the other, his letters to his family caused him to be regarded with suspicion by the baser spirits in the American party. About this time one of his sisters died; the letter he then wrote to his mother is in the usual formal style of the time, yet it shows marks of deep feeling, and he takes occasion, while admitting that the result of the war was uncertain, to avow, with a sternness unusual to him, his intention to face all things rather than abandon the patriot cause. "The worst that can happen is to fall on the last bleak mountain of America; and he who dies there in defense of the injured rights of mankind is happier than his conqueror, more beloved by mankind, more applauded by his own heart." The letter closes by a characteristic touch, when he sends his love to "such as deserve it. The number is not great."

The committee on the Constitution was not ready to report until March, 1777. Then the convention devoted itself solely to the consideration of the report, which, after several weeks' discussion, was adopted with very little change. Jay and Morris led the debate before the convention, as they had done previously in committee. There was perfect agreement upon the general principles. Freehold suffrage was adopted, and a majority of the freeholders of the State were thus the ultimate governing power. The executive, judicial, and legislative powers were separated sharply, as was done in the other States, and later on in the federal Constitution as well. The legislative body was divided into two chambers.

It was over the executive branch that the main con-

test arose. It was conceded that this should be nominally single-headed; that is, that there should be a governor. But the members generally could not realize how different was a governor elected by the people, and responsible to them, from one appointed by an alien and higher power to rule over them, as in the colonial days. The remembrance of the contests with the royal governors was still fresh; and the mere name of governor frightened them. They had the same illogical fear of the Executive that the demagogues of to-day (and some honest but stupid people, as well) profess to feel for a standing army. Men often let the dread of the shadow of a dead wrong frighten them into courting a living evil.

Morris himself was wonderfully clear-sighted and cool-headed. He did not let the memory of the wrong-doing of the royal governors blind him; he saw that the trouble with them lay, not in the power that they held, but in the source from which that power came. Once the source was changed, the power was an advantage, not a harm, to the State. Yet few or none of his companions could see this; and they nervously strove to save their new State from the danger of executive usurpation by trying to make the Executive practically a board of men instead of one man, and by crippling it so as to make it ineffective for good, while at the same time dividing the responsibility, so that no one need be afraid to do evil. Above all, they were anxious to take away from the governor the appointment of the military and civil servants of the State.

Morris had persuaded the committee to leave the appointment of these officials to the governor, the legislature retaining the power of confirmation or rejection; but the convention, under the lead of Jay, rejected this

proposition, and after some discussion adopted in its place the cumbrous and foolish plan of a "council of appointment," to consist of the governor and several senators. As might have been expected, this artificial body worked nothing but harm, and became simply a peculiarly odious political machine.

Again, Morris advocated giving the governor a qualified veto over the acts passed by the legislature; but instead of such a simple and straightforward method of legislative revision, the convention saw fit to adopt a companion piece of foolishness to the council of appointment, in the shape of the equally complicated and anomalous council of revision, consisting of the governor, chancellor, and judges of the Supreme Court, by whom all the acts of the legislature had to be revised before they could become laws. It is marvellous that these two bodies should have lived on so long as they did—over forty years.

The convention did one most praiseworthy thing in deciding in favor of complete religious toleration. This seems natural enough now; but at that time there was hardly a European state that practised it. Great Britain harassed her Catholic subjects in a hundred different ways; while in France Protestants were treated far worse, and, in fact, could scarcely be regarded as having any legal standing whatever. On no other one point do the statesmen of the Revolution show to more marked advantage when compared with their European compeers than in this of complete religious toleration. Their position was taken, too, simply because they deemed it to be the right and proper one; they had nothing to fear or hope from Catholics, and their own interests were in nowise advanced by what they did in the matter.

But in the New York convention toleration was not

obtained without a fight. There always rankled in Jay's mind the memory of the terrible cruelty wrought by Catholics on his Huguenot forefathers; and he introduced into the article on toleration an appendix, which discriminated against the adherents of the Church of Rome, denying them the rights of citizenship until they should solemnly swear before the Supreme Court, first, "that they verily believe in their conscience that no pope, priest, or foreign authority on earth has power to absolve the subjects of this State from their allegiance to the same"; and, second, "that they renounce . . . the dangerous and damnable doctrine that the Pope or any other earthly authority has power to absolve men from sins described in and prohibited by the Holy Gospel." This second point, however important, was of purely theological interest, and had absolutely nothing to do with the State constitution; as to the first proposition, it might have been proper enough had there been the least chance of a conflict between the Pope, either in his temporal or his ecclesiastical capacity, and the United States; but as there was no possibility of such a conflict arising, and as, if it did arise, there would not be the slightest danger of the United States receiving any damage, to put the sentence in would have been not only useless, but exceedingly foolish and harmful, on account of the intense irritation it would have excited.

The whole clause was rejected by a two to one vote, and then all the good that it aimed at was accomplished by the adoption, on the motion of Morris, of a proviso that the toleration granted should not be held to "justify practices inconsistent with the peace and safety of this State." This proviso of Morris remains in the constitution to this day; and thus, while absolute re-

ligious liberty is guaranteed, the State reserves to itself full right of protection, if necessary, against the adherents of any religious body, foreign or domestic, if they menace the public safety.

On a question even more important than religious toleration, namely, the abolition of domestic slavery, Jay and Morris fought side by side; but though the more enlightened of their fellow members went with them, they were a little too much in advance of the age, and failed. They made every effort to have a clause introduced into the constitution recommending to the future legislature of New York to abolish slavery as soon as it could be done consistently with the public safety and the rights of property; "so that in future ages every human being who breathes the air of this State shall enjoy the privileges of a free man." Although they failed in their immediate purpose, yet they had much hearty support, and by the bold stand they took and the high ground they occupied they undoubtedly brought nearer the period when the abolition of slavery in New York became practicable.

The constitution was finally adopted by the convention almost unanimously, and went into effect forthwith, as there was no ratification by the people at large.

As soon as it was adopted a committee, which included Morris, Jay, and Livingston, was appointed to start and organize the new government. The courts of justice were speedily put in running order, and thus one of the most crying evils that affected the State was remedied. A council of safety of fifteen members—again including Morris—was established to act as the provincial government, until the regular legislature should convene. An election for governor was also held almost immediately, and Clinton was chosen. He

was then serving in the field, where he had done good work, and, together with his brother James, had fought with the stubborn valor that seems to go with Anglo-Irish blood. He did not give up his command until several months after he was elected, although meanwhile keeping up constant communication with the Council of Safety, through whom he acted in matters of state.

Meanwhile Burgoyne, with his eight or nine thousand troops, excellently drilled British and Hessians, assisted by Tories, Canadians, and Indians, had crossed the northern frontier, and was moving down toward the heart of the already disorganized State, exciting the wildest panic and confusion. The Council of Safety hardly knew how to act, and finally sent a committee of two, Morris being one, to the headquarters of General Schuyler, who had the supreme command over all the troops in the northern part of New York.

On Morris's arrival he found affairs at a very low ebb, and at once wrote to describe this condition to the president of the Council of Safety. Burgoyne's army had come steadily on. He first destroyed Arnold's flotilla on Lake Champlain. Then he captured the forts along the Lakes, and utterly wrecked the division of the American army that had been told off to defend them, under the very unfortunate General St. Clair. He was now advancing through the great reaches of wooded wilderness toward the head of the Hudson. Schuyler, a general of fair capacity, was doing what he could to hold the enemy back; but his one efficient supporter was the wilderness itself, through which the British army stumbled painfully along. Schuyler had in all less than five thousand men, half of them short-service Continental troops, the other half militia. The farmers

would not turn out until after harvest home; all the bodies of militia, especially those from New England, were very insubordinate and of most fickle temper, and could not be depended on for any sustained contest; as an example, Stark, under whose nominal command the northern New Englanders won the battle of Bennington, actually marched off his whole force the day before the battle of Stillwater, alleging the expiration of the term of service of his soldiers as an excuse for what looked like gross treachery or cowardice, but was probably merely sheer selfish wrong-headedness and mean jealousy. Along the Mohawk valley the dismay was extreme, and the militia could not be got out at all. Jay was so angered by the abject terror in this quarter that he advised leaving the inhabitants to shift for themselves; sound advice, too, for when the pinch came and they were absolutely forced to take arms, they did very fairly at Oriskany. It was even feared that the settlers of the region which afterward became Vermont would go over to the enemy; still, time and space were in our favor, and Morris was quite right when he said in his first letter (dated July 16, 1777): "Upon the whole I think we shall do very well, but this opinion is founded merely upon the barriers which nature has raised against all access from the northward." As he said of himself, he was "a good guesser."

He outlined the plan which he thought the Americans should follow. This was to harass the British in every way, without risking a stand-up fight, while laying waste the country through which they were to pass so as to render it impossible for an army to subsist on it. For the militia he had the most hearty contempt, writing: "Three hundred of the militia of Massachusetts Bay went off this morning, in spite of the opposition—we

should have said, entreaties—of their officers. All the militia on the ground are so heartily tired, and so extremely desirous of getting home, that it is more than probable that none of them will remain here ten days longer. One half was discharged two days ago, to silence, if possible, their clamor; and the remainder, officers excepted, will soon discharge themselves."

The Council of Safety grew so nervous over the outlook that their letters became fairly querulous; and they not unnaturally asked Morris to include in his letters some paragraphs that could be given to the public. To this that rather quick-tempered gentleman took exception, and replied caustically in his next letter, the opening paragraph being, "We have received yours of the 19th, which has afforded us great pleasure, since we are enabled in some measure to collect from it our errand to the northward, one of the most important objects of our journey being, in the opinion of your honorable body, to write the news," and he closes by stating that he shall come back to wait upon them, and learn their pleasure, at once.

Meanwhile the repeated disasters in the north had occasioned much clamor against Schuyler, who, if not a brilliant general, had still done what he could in very trying circumstances, and was in nowise responsible for the various mishaps that had occurred. The New England members of Congress, always jealous of New York, took advantage of this to begin intriguing against him, under the lead of Roger Sherman and others, and finally brought about his replacement by Gates, a much inferior man, with no capacity whatever for command. Morris and Jay both took up Schuyler's cause very warmly, seeing clearly, in the first place, that the disasters were far from ruinous, and that a favorable outcome was

probable; and, in the second place, that it was the people themselves who were to blame and not Schuyler. They went on to Philadelphia to speak for him, but they arrived just a day too late, Gates having been appointed twenty-four hours previous to their coming.

When Gates reached his army the luck had already begun to turn. Burgoyne's outlying parties had been destroyed, his Indians and Canadians had left him, he had been disappointed in his hopes of a Tory uprising in his favor, and, hampered by his baggage-train, he had been brought almost to a standstill in the tangled wilds through which he had slowly ploughed his way. Schuyler had done what he could to hinder the foe's progress, and had kept his own army together as a rallying-point for the militia, who, having gathered in their harvests, and being inspirited by the outcome of the fights at Oriskany and Bennington, flocked in by hundreds to the American standard. Gates himself did literally nothing; he rather hindered his men than otherwise; and the latter were turbulent and prone to disobey orders. But they were now in fine feather for fighting, and there were plenty of them. So Gates merely sat still, and the levy of backwoods farmers, all good individual fighters, and with some excellent brigade and regimental commanders, such as Arnold and Morgan, fairly mobbed to death the smaller number of dispirited and poorly led regulars against whom they were pitted. When the latter were at last fought out and forced to give in, Gates allowed them much better terms than he should have done; and the Continental Congress, to its shame, snatched at a technicality, under cover of which to break the faith plighted through its general, and to avoid fulfilling the conditions to which he had so foolishly agreed.

Morris and Jay, though unable to secure the reten-

tion of Schuyler, had, nevertheless, by their representations while at Philadelphia, prevailed on the authorities largely to reinforce the army which was about to be put under Gates. Morris was very angry at the intrigue by which the latter had been given the command; but what he was especially aiming at was the success of the cause, not the advancement of his friends. Once Gates was appointed he did all in his power to strengthen him, and, with his usual clear-sightedness, he predicted his ultimate success.

Schuyler was a man of high character and public spirit, and he behaved really nobly in the midst of his disappointment; his conduct throughout affording a very striking contrast to that of McClellan, under somewhat similar circumstances in the Civil War. Morris wrote him, sympathizing with him, and asking him to sink all personal feeling and devote his energies to the common weal of the country while out of power just as strenuously as he had done when in command. Schuyler responded that he should continue to serve his country as zealously as before, and he made his words good; but Gates was jealous of the better man whose downfall he had been the instrument of accomplishing, and declined to profit by his help.

In a later letter to Schuyler, written September 18, 1777, Morris praised the latter very warmly for the way he had behaved, and commented roughly on Gates's littleness of spirit. He considered that with such a commander there was nothing to be hoped for from skilful management, and that Burgoyne would have to be simply tired out. Alluding to a rumor that the Indians were about to take up the hatchet for us, he wrote, in the humorous vein he adopted so often in dealing even with the most pressing matters: "If this be true, it would be

infinitely better to wear away the enemy's army by a scrupulous and polite attention, than to violate the rules of decorum and the laws of hospitality by making an attack upon strangers in our own country!" He gave Schuyler the news of Washington's defeat at the battle of Brandywine, and foretold the probable loss of Philadelphia and a consequent winter campaign.

In ending he gave a thoroughly characteristic sketch of the occupations of himself and his colleagues. "The chief justice (Jay) is gone to fetch his wife. The chancellor (Livingston) is solacing himself with his wife, his farm, and his imagination. Our Senate is doing, I know not what. In Assembly we wrangle long to little purpose. . . . We have some principles of fermentation which must, if it be possible, evaporate before business is entered upon."

CHAPTER IV

IN THE CONTINENTAL CONGRESS

At the end of 1777, while still but twenty-five years old, Morris was elected to the Continental Congress, and took his seat in that body at Yorktown in the following January.

He was immediately appointed as one of a committee of five members to go to Washington's headquarters at Valley Forge and examine into the condition of the Continental troops.

The dreadful suffering of the American army in this winter camp was such that its memory has literally eaten its way into the hearts of our people, and it comes before our minds with a vividness that dims the remembrance of any other disaster. Washington's gaunt, half-starved Continentals, shoeless and ragged, shivered in their crazy huts, worn out by want and illness, and by the bitter cold; while the members of the Continental Congress not only failed to support them in the present, but even grudged them the poor gift of a promise of half-pay in the future. Some of the delegates, headed by Samuel Adams, were actually caballing against the great chief himself, the one hope of America. Meanwhile the States looked askance at each other, and each sunk into supine indifference when its own borders were for the moment left unthreatened by the foe. Throughout the Revolutionary War our people hardly once pulled with a will together; although almost every locality in turn, on some one occasion, varied its lethargy by a spasm of ter-

rible energy. Yet, again, it must be remembered that we were never more to be dreaded than when our last hope seemed gone; and if the people were unwilling to show the wisdom and self-sacrifice that would have insured success, they were equally determined under no circumstances whatever to acknowledge final defeat.

To Jay, with whom he was always intimate, Morris wrote in strong terms from Valley Forge, painting things as they were, but without a shadow of doubt or distrust; for he by this time saw clearly enough that in American warfare the darkest hour was often followed close indeed by dawn. "The skeleton of an army presents itself to our eyes in a naked, starving condition, out of health, out of spirits. But I have seen Fort George in 1777." The last sentence refers to what he saw of Schuyler's forces, when affairs in New York State were at the blackest, just before the tide began to turn against Burgoyne. He then went on to beseech Jay to exert himself to the utmost on the great question of taxation, the most vital of all. Morris himself was so good a financier that Revolutionary financial economics drove him almost wild. The Continental Congress, of which he had just become a member, he did not esteem very highly, and dismissed it, as well as the currency as having "both depreciated." The State of Pennsylvania, he remarked, was "sick unto death"; and added that "Sir William [the British general] would prove a most damnable physician."

Most wisely, in examining and reporting, he paid heed almost exclusively to Washington's recommendations, and the plan he and his colleagues produced was little more than an enlargement of the general's suggestions as to filling out the regiments, regulating rank, modelling the various departments, etc. In fact, Morris now

devoted himself to securing the approval of Congress for Washington's various plans.

In urging one of the most important of these he encountered very determined opposition. Washington was particularly desirous of securing a permanent provision for the officers by the establishment of a system of half-pay, stating that without some such arrangement he saw no hope whatever for the salvation of the cause; for as things then were the officers were leaving day by day; and of those who went home on furlough to the Eastern and Southern States, many, instead of returning, went into some lucrative employment. This fact, by the way, while showing the difficulties with which Washington had to deal, and therefore his greatness, since he successfully dealt with them, at the same time puts the officers of the Revolution in no very favorable light as compared with their descendants at the time of the great rebellion; and the Continental Congress makes a still worse showing.

When Morris tried to push through a measure providing for half-pay for life, he was fought, tooth and nail, by many of his colleagues, including, to their lasting discredit be it said, every delegate from New England. The folly of these ultrademocratic delegates almost passes belief. They seemed incapable of learning how the fight for liberty should be made. Their leaders, like Samuel Adams and John Hancock, did admirable service in exciting the Americans to make the struggle; but once it was begun, their function ended, and from thence onward they hampered almost as much as they helped the patriot cause. New England, too, had passed through the period when its patriotic fervor was at white heat. It still remained as resolute as ever; and if the danger had been once more brought home to its

very door-sill, then it would have risen again as it had risen before; but without the spur of an immediate necessity it moved but sluggishly.

The New Englanders were joined by the South Carolina delegates. Morris was backed by the members from New York, Virginia, and the other States, and he won the victory, but not without being obliged to accept amendments that took away some of the good of the measure. Half-pay was granted, but it was only to last for seven years after the close of the war; and the paltry bounty of eighty dollars was to be given to every soldier who served out his time to the end.

At the same period Morris was engaged on numerous other committees, dealing chiefly with the finances, or with the remedy of abuses that had crept into the administration of the army. In one of his reports he exposed thoroughly the frightful waste in the purchase and distribution of supplies, and, what was much worse, the accompanying frauds. These frauds had become a most serious evil; Jay, in one of his letters to Morris, had already urgently requested him to turn his attention especially to stopping the officers, in particular those of the staff, from themselves engaging in trade, on account of the jobbing and swindling that it produced. The shoddy contractors of the Civil War had plenty of predecessors in the Revolution.

When these events occurred, in the spring of 1778, it was already three years after the fight at Lexington; certainly, the Continental armies of that time do not compare favorably, even taking all difficulties into account, with the Confederate forces which in 1864, three years after the fall of Sumter, fronted Grant and Sherman. The men of the Revolution failed to show the capacity to organize for fighting purposes, and the abil-

ity to bend all energies toward the attainment of a given end, which their great-grandsons of the Civil War, both at the North and the South, possessed. Yet, after all, their very follies sprang from their virtues, from their inborn love of freedom, and their impatience of the control of outsiders. So fierce had they been in their opposition to the rule of foreigners that they were now hardly willing to submit to being ruled by themselves; they had seen power so abused that they feared its very use; they were anxious to assert their independence of all mankind, even of each other. Stubborn, honest, and fearless, they were taught with difficulty, and only by the grinding logic of an imperious necessity, that it was no surrender of their freedom to submit to rulers chosen by themselves, through whom alone that freedom could be won. They had not yet learned that right could be enforced only by might, that union was to the full as important as liberty, because it was the prerequisite condition for the establishment and preservation of liberty.

But if the Americans of the Revolution were not perfect, how their faults dwindle when we stand them side by side with their European compeers! What European nation then brought forth rulers as wise and pure as our statesmen, or masses as free and self-respecting as our people? There was far more swindling, jobbing, cheating, and stealing in the English army than in ours; the British king and his ministers need no criticism; and the outcome of the war proves that their nation as a whole was less resolute than our own. As for the other European powers, the faults of our leaders sink out of sight when matched against the ferocious frivolity of the French noblesse, or the ignoble, sordid, bloody baseness of those swinish German kinglets who let out their subjects to do hired murder, and battened on the blood

and sweat of the wretched beings under them, until the whirlwind of the French Revolution swept their carcasses from off the world they cumbered.

We must needs give all honor to the men who founded our Commonwealth; only in so doing let us remember that they brought into being a government under which their children were to grow better and not worse.

Washington at once recognized in Morris a man whom he could trust in every way, and on whose help he could rely in other matters besides getting his officers half-pay. The young New Yorker was one of the great Virginian's warmest supporters in Congress, and took the lead in championing his cause at every turn. He was the leader in putting down intrigues like that of the French-Irish adventurer Conway, his ready tongue and knowledge of parliamentary tactics, no less than his ability, rendering him the especial dread and dislike of the anti-Washington faction.

Washington wrote to Morris very freely, and in one of his letters complained of the conduct of some of the officers who wished to resign when affairs looked dark, and to be reinstated as soon as they brightened a little. Morris replied with one of his bright caustic letters, sparing his associates very little, their pompous tediousness and hesitation being peculiarly galling to a man so far-seeing and so prompt to make up his mind. He wrote: "We are going on with the regimental arrangements as fast as possible, and I think the day begins to appear with respect to that business. Had our Saviour addressed a chapter to the rulers of mankind, as he did many to the subjects, I am persuaded his good sense would have dictated this text: *Be not wise overmuch.* Had the several members who compose our multifarious

body been only wise *enough*, our business would long since have been completed. But our superior abilities, or the desire of appearing to possess them, lead us to such exquisite tediousness of debate that the most precious moments pass unheeded away. . . . As to what you mention of the extraordinary demeanor of some gentlemen, I cannot but agree with you that such conduct is not the most *honorable*. But, on the other hand, you must allow that it is the most *safe*, and certainly you are not to learn that, however ignorant of that happy art in your own person, the bulk of us bipeds know well how to balance solid pudding against empty praise. There are other things, my dear sir, beside virtue, which are their own *reward*."

Washington chose Morris as his confidential friend and agent to bring privately before Congress a matter in reference to which he did not consider it politic to write publicly. He was at that time annoyed beyond measure by the shoals of foreign officers who were seeking employment in the army, and he wished Congress to stop giving them admission to the service. These foreign officers were sometimes honorable men, but more often adventurers; with two or three striking exceptions, they failed to do as well as officers of native birth; and, as later in the Civil War, so in the Revolution, it appeared that Americans could be best commanded by Americans. Washington had the greatest dislike for these adventurers, stigmatizing them as "men who in the first instance tell you that they wish for nothing more than the honor of serving in so glorious a cause as volunteers, the next day solicit rank without pay, the day following want money advanced to them, and in the course of a week want further promotion, and are not satisfied with anything you can do for them." He

ended by writing: "I do most devoutly wish that we had not a single foreigner among us, except the Marquis de Lafayette, who acts upon very different principles from those which govern the rest." To Lafayette, indeed, America owes as much as to any of her own children, for his devotion to us was as disinterested and sincere as it was effective; and it is a pleasant thing to remember that we, in our turn, not only repaid him materially, but, what he valued far more, that our whole people yielded him all his life long the most loving homage a man could receive. No man ever kept pleasanter relations with a people he had helped than Lafayette did with us.

Morris replied to Washington that he would do all in his power to aid him. Meanwhile he had also contracted a very warm friendship for Greene, then newly appointed quartermaster-general of the army, and proved a most useful ally, both in and out of Congress, in helping the general to get his department in good running order, and in extricating it from the frightful confusion in which it had previously been plunged.

He also specially devoted himself at this time to an investigation of the finances, which were in a dreadful condition; and by the ability with which he performed his very varied duties he acquired such prominence that he was given the chairmanship of the most important of all the congressional committees. This was the committee to which was confided the task of conferring with the British commissioners, who had been sent over, in the spring of 1778, to treat with the Americans, in accordance with the terms of what were known as Lord North's conciliatory bills. These bills were two in number, the first giving up the right of taxation, about which the quarrel had originally arisen, and the second author-

izing the commissioners to treat with the revolted colonies on all questions in dispute. They were introduced in Parliament on account of the little headway made by the British in subduing their former subjects, and were pressed hastily through because of the fear of an American alliance with France, which was then, indeed, almost concluded.

Three years before, these bills would have achieved their end; but now they came by just that much time too late. The embittered warfare had lasted long enough entirely to destroy the old friendly feelings; and the Americans having once tasted the "perilous pleasure" of freedom, having once stretched out their arms and stood before the world's eyes as their own masters, it was certain that they would never forego their liberty, no matter with what danger it was fraught, no matter how light the yoke, or how kindly the bondage, by which it was to be replaced.

Two days after the bills were received, Morris drew up and presented his report, which was unanimously adopted by Congress. Its tenor can be gathered from its summing up, which declared that the indispensable preliminaries to any treaty would have to be the withdrawal of all the British fleets and armies, and the acknowledgment of the independence of the United States; and it closed by calling on the several States to furnish without delay their quotas of troops for the coming campaign.

This decisive stand was taken when America was still without allies in the contest; but ten days afterward messengers came to Congress bearing copies of the treaty with France. It was ratified forthwith, and again Morris was appointed chairman of a committee, this time to issue an address on the subject to the Amer-

ican people at large. He penned this address himself, explaining fully the character of the crisis, and going briefly over the events that had led to it; and shortly afterward he drew up, on behalf of Congress, a sketch of all the proceedings in reference to the British commissioners, under the title of "Observations on the American Revolution," giving therein a masterly outline not only of the doings of Congress in the particular matter under consideration, but also an account of the causes of the war, of the efforts of the Americans to maintain peace, and of the chief events that had taken place, as well as a comparison between the contrasting motives and aims of the contestants.

Morris was one of the committee appointed to receive the French minister, M. Gérard. Immediately afterward he was also selected by Congress to draft the instructions which were to be sent to Franklin, the American minister at the Court of Versailles. As a token of the closeness of our relations with France, he was requested to show these instructions to M. Gérard, which he accordingly did; and some interesting features of the conversation between the two men have been preserved for us in the despatches of Gérard to the French Court. The Americans were always anxious to undertake the conquest of Canada, although Washington did not believe the scheme feasible; and the French strongly, although secretly, opposed it, as it was their policy from the beginning that Canada should remain English. Naturally the French did not wish to see America transformed into a conquering power, a menace to themselves and to the Spaniards as well as to the English; nor can they be criticised for feeling in this way, or taunted with acting only from motives of self-interest. It is doubtless true that their purposes in going into the

war were mixed; they unquestionably wished to benefit themselves, and to hurt their old and successful rival; but it is equally unquestionable that they were also moved by a generous spirit of sympathy and admiration for the struggling colonists. It would, however, have been folly to let this sympathy blind them to the consequences that might ensue to all Europeans having possessions in America, if the Americans should become not only independent, but also aggressive; and it was too much to expect them to be so far-sighted as to see that, once independent, it was against the very nature of things that the Americans should *not* be aggressive, and impossible that they should be aught but powerful and positive instruments, both in their own persons and by their example, in freeing the whole western continent from European control.

Accordingly M. Gérard endeavored, though without success, to prevail on Morris not to mention the question of an invasion of Canada in the instructions to Franklin. He also warned the American of the danger of alarming Spain by manifesting a wish to encroach on its territory in the Mississippi valley, mentioning and condemning the attitude taken by several members of Congress to the effect that the navigation of the Mississippi should belong equally to the English and Americans.

Morris's reply showed how little even the most intelligent American of that time—especially if he came from the Northern or Eastern States—could appreciate the destiny of his country. He stated that his colleagues favored restricting the growth of our country to the south and west, and believed that the navigation of the Mississippi, from the Ohio down, should belong exclusively to the Spaniards, as otherwise the western

settlements springing up in the valley of the Ohio, and on the shores of the Great Lakes, would not only domineer over Spain, but also over the United States, and would certainly render themselves independent in the end. He further said that some at least of those who were anxious to secure the navigation of the Mississippi were so from interested motives, having money ventures in the establishments along the river. However, if he at this time failed fully to grasp his country's future, he was, later on, one of the first in the Northern States to recognize it; and once he did see it he promptly changed, and became the strongest advocate of our territorial expansion.

Accompanying his instructions to Franklin, Morris sent a pamphlet entitled "Observations on the Finances of America," to be laid before the French ministry. Practically, all that the pamphlet amounted to was a most urgent begging letter, showing that our own people could not, or would not, either pay taxes or take up a domestic loan, so that we stood in dire need of a subsidy from abroad. The drawing up of such a document could hardly have been satisfactory employment for a high-spirited man who wished to be proud of his country.

All through our negotiations with France and England, Morris's views coincided with those of Washington, Hamilton, Jay, and the others who afterward became leaders of the Federalist party. Their opinions were well expressed by Jay in a letter to Morris written about this time, which ran: "I view a return to the domination of Britain with horror, and would risk all for independence; but that point ceded, . . . the destruction of Old England would hurt me; I wish it well; it afforded my ancestors an asylum from persecution."

The rabid American adherents of France could not understand such sentiments, and the more mean-spirited among them always tried to injure Morris on account of his loyalist relatives, although so many families were divided in this same way, Franklin's only son being himself a prominent Tory. So bitter was this feeling that when, later on, Morris's mother, who was within the British lines, became very ill, he actually had to give up his intended visit to her, because of the furious clamor that was raised against it. He refers bitterly, in one of his letters to Jay, to the "malevolence of individuals," as something he had to expect, but which he announced that he would conquer by so living as to command the respect of those whose respect was worth having.

When, however, his foes were of sufficient importance to warrant his paying attention to them individually, Morris proved abundantly able to take care of himself, and to deal heavier blows than he received. This was shown in the controversy which convulsed Congress over the conduct of Silas Deane, the original American envoy to France. Deane did not behave very well, but at first he was certainly much more sinned against than sinning, and Morris took up his cause warmly. Thomas Paine, the famous author of "Common Sense," who was secretary of the Committee of Foreign Affairs, attacked Deane and his defenders, as well as the Court of France, with peculiar venom, using as weapons the secrets he became acquainted with through his official position, and which he was in honor bound not to divulge. For this Morris had him removed from his secretaryship, and in the debate handled him extremely roughly, characterizing him with contemptuous severity as "a mere adventurer from England . . . ignorant even of gram-

mar," and ridiculing his pretensions to importance. Paine was an adept in the art of invective; but he came out second best in this encounter, and never forgot or forgave his antagonist.

As a rule, however, Morris was kept too busily at work to spare time for altercations. He was chairman of three important standing committees, those on the commissary, quartermaster's, and medical departments, and did the whole business for each. He also had more than his share of special committee work, besides playing his full part in the debates and consultations of the Congress itself. Moreover, his salary was so small that he had to eke it out by the occasional practice of his profession. He devoted himself especially to the consideration of our finances and of our foreign relations; and, as he grew constantly to possess more and more weight and influence in Congress, he was appointed, early in 1779, as chairman of a very important committee, which was to receive communications from our ministers abroad, as well as from the French envoy. He drew out its report, together with the draft of instructions to our foreign ministers, which it recommended. Congress accepted the first, and adopted the last, without change, whereby it became the basis of the treaty by which we finally won peace. In his draft he had been careful not to bind down our representatives on minor points, and to leave them as large liberty of action as was possible; but the main issues, such as the boundaries, the navigation of the Mississippi, and the fisheries, were discussed at length and in order.

At the time this draft of instructions for a treaty was sent out, there was much demand among certain members in Congress that we should do all in our power to make foreign alliances, and to procure recognitions of

our independence in every possible quarter. To this Morris was heartily opposed, deeming that this "rage for treaties," as he called it, was not very dignified on our part. He held rightly that our true course was to go our own gait, without seeking outside favor, until we had shown ourselves able to keep our own place among nations, when the recognitions would come without asking. Whether European nations recognized us as a free people, or not, was of little moment so long as we ourselves knew that we had become one in law and in fact, through the right of battle and the final arbitrament of the sword.

Besides these questions of national policy, Morris also had to deal with an irritating matter affecting mainly New York. This was the dispute of that State with the people of Vermont, who wished to form a separate commonwealth of their own, while New York claimed that their lands came within its borders. Even the fear of their common foe, the British, against whom they needed to employ their utmost strength, was barely sufficient to prevent the two communities from indulging in a small civil war of their own; and they persisted in pressing their rival claims upon the attention of Congress, and clamoring for a decision from that harassed and overburdened body. Clinton, who was much more of a politician than a statesman, led the popular party in this foolish business, the majority of the New Yorkers being apparently nearly as enthusiastic in asserting their sovereignty over Vermont as they were in declaring their independence of Britain. Morris, however, was very half-hearted in pushing the affair before Congress. He doubted if Congress had the power, and he knew it lacked the will, to move in the matter at all; and besides he did not sympathize with the position taken by

his State. He was wise enough to see that the Vermonters had much of the right on their side in addition to the great fact of possession; and that New York would be probably unable to employ force enough to conquer them. Clinton was a true type of the separatist or States'-rights politician of that day: he cared little how the national weal was affected by the quarrel; and he was far more anxious to bluster than to fight over the matter, to which end he kept besieging the delegates in Congress with useless petitions. In a letter to him, Morris put the case with his usual plainness, telling him that it was perfectly idle to keep worrying Congress to take action, for it would certainly not do so, and, if it did render a decision, the Vermonters would no more respect it than they would the Pope's Bull. He went on to show his characteristic contempt for half-measures, and capacity for striking straight at the root of things: "Either let these people alone, or conquer them. I prefer the latter; but I doubt the means. If we have the means let them be used, and let Congress deliberate and decide, or deliberate without deciding—it is of no consequence. Success will sanctify every operation. . . . If we have not the means of conquering these people we must let them alone. We must continue our impotent threats, or we must make a treaty. . . . If we continue our threats they will either hate or despise us, and perhaps both. . . . On the whole, then, my conclusion is here, as on most other human affairs, act decisively, fight or submit,—conquer or treat." Morris was right; the treaty was finally made, and Vermont became an independent State.

But the small politicians of New York would not forgive him for the wisdom and the broad feeling of nationality he showed on this and so many other ques-

tions; and they defeated him when he was a candidate for re-election to Congress at the end of 1779. The charge they urged against him was that he devoted his time wholly to the service of the nation at large, and not to that of New York in particular; his very devotion to the public business, which had kept him from returning to the State, being brought forward to harm him. Arguments of this kind are common enough even at the present day, and effective too, among that numerous class of men with narrow minds and selfish hearts. Many an able and upright congressman since Morris has been sacrificed because his constituents found he was fitted to do the exact work needed; because he showed himself capable of serving the whole nation, and did not devote his time to advancing the interests of only a portion thereof.

CHAPTER V

FINANCES: THE TREATY OF PEACE

At the end of 1779 Morris was thus retired to private life; and, having by this time made many friends in Philadelphia, he took up his abode in that city. His leaving Congress was small loss to himself, as that body was rapidly sinking into a condition of windy decrepitude.

He at once began working at his profession, and also threw himself with eager zest into every attainable form of gaiety and amusement, for he was of a most pleasure-loving temperament, very fond of society, and a great favorite in the little American world of wit and fashion. But although in private life, he nevertheless kept his grip on public affairs, and devoted himself to the finances, which were in a most wretched state. He could not keep out of public life; he probably agreed with Jay, who, on hearing that he was again a private citizen, wrote him to "remember that Achilles made no figure at the spinning-wheel." At any rate, as early as February, 1780, he came to the front once more as the author of a series of essays on the finances. They were published in Philadelphia, and attracted the attention of all thinking men by their soundness. In fact it was in our monetary affairs that the key to the situation was to be found; for, had we been willing to pay honestly and promptly the necessary war expenses, we should have ended the struggle in short order. But the niggardliness as well as the real poverty of the people, the

jealousies of the States, kept aflame by the States'-rights leaders for their own selfish purposes, and the foolish ideas of most of the congressional delegates on all money matters, combined to keep our Treasury in a pitiable condition.

Morris tried to show the people at large the advantage of submitting to reasonable taxation, while at the same time combating some of the theories entertained as well by themselves as by their congressional representatives. He began by discussing with great clearness what money really is, how far coin can be replaced by paper, the interdependence of money and credit, and other elementary points in reference to which most of his fellow citizens seemed to possess wonderfully mixed ideas. He attacked the efforts of Congress to make their currency legal tender, and then showed the utter futility of one of the pet schemes of Revolutionary financial wisdom, the regulation of prices by law. Hard times, then as now, always produced not only a large debtor class, but also a corresponding number of political demagogues who truckled to it; and both demagogue and debtor, when they clamored for laws which should "relieve" the latter, meant thereby laws which would enable him to swindle his creditor. The people, moreover, liked to lay the blame for their misfortunes neither on fate nor on themselves, but on some unfortunate outsider; and they were especially apt to attack as "monopolists" the men who had purchased necessary supplies in large quantities to profit by their rise in price. Accordingly they passed laws against them; and Morris showed in his essays the unwisdom of such legislation, while not defending for a moment the men who looked on the misfortunes of their country solely as offering a field for their own harvesting.

He ended by drawing out an excellent scheme of taxation; but, unfortunately, the people were too short-sighted to submit to any measure of the sort, no matter how wise and necessary. One of the pleas he made for his scheme was, that something of the sort would be absolutely necessary for the preservation of the Federal Union, "which," he wrote, "in my poor opinion, will greatly depend upon the management of the revenue." He showed with his usual clearness the need of obtaining, for financial as well as for all other reasons, a firmer union, as the existing confederation bade fair to become, as its enemies had prophesied, a rope of sand. He also foretold graphically the misery that would ensue —and that actually did ensue—when the pressure from a foreign foe should cease, and the States should be resolved into a disorderly league of petty, squabbling communities. In ending he remarked bitterly: "The Articles of Confederation were formed when the attachment to Congress was warm and great. The framers of them, therefore, seem to have been only solicitous how to provide against the power of that body, which, by means of their foresight and care, now exists by mere courtesy and sufferance."

Although Morris was not able to convert Congress to the ways of sound thinking, his ability and clearness impressed themselves on all the best men, notably on Robert Morris—who was no relation of his, by the way —the first in the line of American statesmen who have been great in finance; a man whose services to our Treasury stand on a par, if not with those of Hamilton, at least with those of Gallatin and John Sherman. Congress had just established four departments, with secretaries at the head of each. The two most important were the departments of Foreign Affairs and of Finance.

Livingston was given the former, while Robert Morris received the latter; and immediately afterward appointed Gouverneur Morris as assistant financier, at a salary of eighteen hundred and fifty dollars a year.

Morris accepted this appointment, and remained in office for three years and a half, until the beginning of 1785. He threw himself heart and soul into the work, helping his chief in every way; and in particular giving him invaluable assistance in the establishment of the "Bank of North America," which Congress was persuaded to incorporate—an institution which was the first of its kind in the country. It was of wonderful effect in restoring the public credit, and was absolutely invaluable in the financial operations undertaken by the secretary.

When, early in 1782, the secretary was directed by Congress to present to that body a report on the foreign coins circulating in the country, it was prepared and sent in by Gouverneur Morris, and he accompanied it with a plan for an American coinage. The postscript was the really important part of the document, and the plan therein set forth was made the basis of our present coinage system, although not until several years later, and then only with important modifications, suggested, for the most part, by Jefferson.

Although his plan was modified, it still remains true that Gouverneur Morris was the founder of our national coinage. He introduced the system of decimal notation, invented the word "cent" to express one of the smaller coins, and nationalized the already familiar word "dollar." His plan, however, was a little too abstruse for the common mind, the unit being made so small that a large sum would have had to be expressed in a very great number of figures, and there being five

or six different kinds of new coins, some of them not simple multiples of each other. Afterward he proposed as a modification a system of pounds, or dollars, and doits, the doit answering to our present mill, while providing also an ingenious arrangement by which the money of account was to differ from the money of coinage. Jefferson changed the system by grafting on it the dollar as a unit, and simplifying it; and Hamilton perfected it further.

To understand the advantage, as well as the boldness, of Morris's scheme, we must keep in mind the horrible condition of our currency at that time. We had no proper coins of our own; nothing but hopelessly depreciated paper bills, a mass of copper, and some clipped and counterfeited gold and silver coin from the mints of England, France, Spain, and even Germany. Dollars, pounds, shillings, doubloons, ducats, moidores, joes, crowns, pistareens, coppers, and sous circulated indifferently, and with various values in each colony. A dollar was worth six shillings in Massachusetts, eight in New York, seven and sixpence in Pennsylvania, six again in Virginia, eight again in North Carolina, thirty-two and a half in South Carolina, and five in Georgia. The government itself had to resort to clipping in one of its most desperate straits; and at last people would only take payment by weight of gold or silver.

Morris, in his report, dwelt especially on three points: first, that the new money should be easily intelligible to the multitude, and should, therefore, bear a close relation to the coins already existing, as otherwise its sudden introduction would bring business to a standstill, and would excite distrust and suspicion everywhere, particularly among the poorest and most ignorant, the day-laborers, the farm servants, and the hired help;

second, that its lowest divisible sum, or unit, should be very small, so that the price and the value of little things could be made proportionate; and third, that as far as possible the money should increase in decimal ratio. The Spanish dollar was the coin most widely circulated, while retaining everywhere about the same value. Accordingly he took this, and then sought for a unit that would go evenly into it, as well as into the various shillings, disregarding the hopelessly aberrant shilling of South Carolina. Such a unit was a quarter of a grain of pure silver, equal to the one fourteen hundred and fortieth part of a dollar; it was not, of course, necessary to have it exactly represented in coin. On the contrary, he proposed to strike two copper pieces, respectively of five and eight units, to be known as *fives* and *eights*. Two *eights* would then make a penny in Pennsylvania, and three *eights* one in Georgia, while three *fives* would make one in New York, and four would make one in Massachusetts. Morris's great aim was, while establishing uniform coins for the entire Union, to get rid of the fractional remainders in translating the old currencies into the new; and in addition his reckoning adapted itself to the different systems in the different States, as well as to the different coins in use. But he introduced an entirely new system of coinage, and moreover used therein the names of several old coins while giving them new values. His originally proposed table of currency was as follows:

One crown = ten dollars, or	10,000 units
One dollar = ten bills, or	1,000 "
One bill = ten pence, or	100 "
One penny = ten quarters, or	10 "
One quarter =	1 "

But he proposed that for convenience other coins should

be struck, like the copper *five* and *eight* above spoken of, and he afterward altered his names. He then called the bill of one hundred units a *cent*, making it consist of twenty-five grains of silver and two of copper, being thus the lowest silver coin. Five *cents* were to make a *quint*, and ten a *mark*.

Congress, according to its custom, received the report, applauded it, and did nothing in the matter. Shortly afterward, however, Jefferson took it up, when the whole subject was referred to a committee of which he was a member. He highly approved of Morris's plan, and took from it the idea of a decimal system, and the use of the words "dollar" and "cent." But he considered Morris's unit too small, and preferred to take as his own the Spanish dollar, which was already known to all the people, its value being uniform and well understood. Then, by keeping strictly to the decimal system, and dividing the dollar into one hundred parts, he got cents for our fractional currency. He thus introduced a simpler system than that of Morris, with an existing and well-understood unit, instead of an imaginary one that would have to be, for the first time, brought to the knowledge of the people, and which might be adopted only with reluctance. On the other hand, Jefferson's system failed entirely to provide for the extension of the old currencies in the terms of the new without the use of fractions. On this account Morris vehemently opposed it, but it was nevertheless adopted. He foretold, what actually came to pass, that the people would be very reluctant to throw away their local moneys in order to take up a general money which bore no special relation to them. For half a century afterward the people clung to their absurd shillings and sixpences, the government itself, in its post-office transactions, being

obliged to recognize the obsolete terms in vogue in certain localities. Some curious pieces circulated freely up to the time of the Civil War. Still, Jefferson's plan worked admirably in the end.

All the time he was working so hard at the finances, Morris nevertheless continued to enjoy himself to the full in the society of Philadelphia. Imperious, light-hearted, good-looking, well-dressed, he ranked as a wit among men, as a beau among women. He was equally sought for dances and dinners. He was a fine scholar and a polished gentleman; a capital story-teller; and had just a touch of erratic levity that served to render him still more charming. Occasionally he showed whimsical peculiarities, usually about very small things, that brought him into trouble; and one such freak cost him a serious injury. In his capacity of young man of fashion, he used to drive about town in a phaeton with a pair of small, spirited horses; and because of some whim, he would not allow the groom to stand at their heads. So one day they took fright, ran, threw him out, and broke his leg. The leg had to be amputated, and he was ever afterward forced to wear a wooden one. However, he took his loss with most philosophic cheerfulness, and even bore with equanimity the condolences of those exasperating individuals, of a species by no means peculiar to Revolutionary times, who endeavored to prove to him the manifest falsehood that such an accident was "all for the best." To one of these dreary gentlemen he responded, with disconcerting vivacity, that his visitor had so handsomely argued the advantage of being entirely legless as to make him almost tempted to part with his remaining limb; and to another he announced that at least there was the compensation that he would be a *steadier* man with one leg than with two.

Wild accounts of the accident got about, which rather irritated him, and in answer to a letter from Jay he wrote: "I suppose it was Deane who wrote to you from France about the loss of my leg. His account is facetious. Let it pass. The leg is gone, and there is an end of the matter." His being crippled did not prevent him from going about in society very nearly as much as ever; and society in Philadelphia was at the moment gayer than in any other American city. Indeed Jay, a man of Puritanic morality, wrote to Morris somewhat gloomily to inquire about "the rapid progress of luxury at Philadelphia"; to which his younger friend, who highly appreciated the good things of life, replied light-heartedly: "With respect to our taste for luxury, do not grieve about it. Luxury is not so bad a thing as it is often supposed to be; and if it were, still we must follow the course of things, and turn to advantage what exists, since we have not the power to annihilate or create. The very definition of 'luxury' is as difficult as the suppression of it." In another letter he remarked that he thought there were quite as many knaves among the men who went on foot as there were among those who drove in carriages.

Jay at this time, having been successively a member of the Continental Congress, the New York legislature, and the State Constitutional Convention, having also been the first chief justice of his native State, and then president of the Continental Congress, had been sent as our minister to Spain. Morris always kept up an intimate correspondence with him. It is noticeable that the three great Revolutionary statesmen from New York, Hamilton, Jay, and Morris, always kept on good terms, and always worked together; while the friendship between two, Jay and Morris, was very close.

The two men, in their correspondence, now and then touched on other than State matters. One of Jay's letters which deals with the education of his children would be most healthful reading for those Americans of the present day who send their children to be brought up abroad in Swiss schools, or English and German universities. He writes: "I think the youth of every free, civilized country should be educated in it, and not permitted to travel out of it until age has made them so cool and firm as to retain their national and moral impressions. American youth may possibly form proper and perhaps useful friendships in European seminaries, but I think not so *probably* as among their fellow citizens, with whom they are to grow up, whom it will be useful for them to know and be early known to, and with whom they are to be engaged in the business of active life. . . . I do not hesitate to prefer an American education." The longer Jay stayed away, the more devoted he became to America. He had a good, hearty, honest contempt for the miserable "cosmopolitanism" so much affected by the feebler folk of fashion. As he said, he "could never become so far a citizen of the world as to view every part of it with equal regard," for "his affections were deep-rooted in America," and he always asserted that he had never seen anything in Europe to cause him to abate his prejudices in favor of his own land.

Jay had a very hard time at the Spanish court, which, he wrote Morris, had "little money, less wisdom, and no credit." Spain, although fighting England, was bitterly jealous of the United States, fearing most justly our aggressive spirit, and desiring to keep the lower Mississippi valley entirely under its own control. Jay, a statesman of intensely national spirit, was determined

to push our boundaries as far westward as possible; he insisted on their reaching to the Mississippi, and on our having the right to navigate that stream. Morris did not agree with him, and on this subject, as has been already said, he for once showed less than his usual power of insight into the future. He wrote Jay that it was absurd to quarrel about a country inhabited only by red men, and to claim "a territory we cannot occupy, a navigation we cannot enjoy." He also ventured the curiously false prediction that, if the territory beyond the Alleghanies should ever be filled up, it would be by a population drawn from the whole world, not one-hundredth part of it American, which would immediately become an independent and rival nation. However, he could not make Jay swerve a hand's breadth from his position about our Western boundaries, though on every other point the two were in hearty accord.

In relating and forecasting the military situation, Morris was more happy. He was peculiarly interested in Greene, and from the outset foretold the final success of his Southern campaign. In a letter written March 31, 1781, after the receipt of the news of the battle of Guilford Court-House, he describes to Jay Greene's forces and prospects. His troops included, he writes, "from 1500 to 2000 Continentals, many of them raw, and somewhat more of militia than regular troops—the whole of these almost in a state of nature, and of whom it ought to be said, as by Hamlet to Horatio, 'Thou hast no other revenue but thy good spirits to feed and clothe thee.'" The militia he styled the "*fruges consumere nati* of an army." He then showed the necessity of the battle being fought, on account of the fluctuating state of the militia, the incapacity of the State governments to help themselves, the poverty of the country

("so that the very teeth of the enemy defend them, especially in retreat"), and, above all, because a defeat was of little consequence to us, while it would ruin the enemy. He wrote: "There is no loss in fighting away two or three hundred men who would go home if they were not put in the way of being knocked on the head. . . . These are unfeeling reflections. I would apologize for them to any one who did not know that I have at least enough of sensibility. The gush of sentiment will not alter the nature of things, and the business of the statesman is more to reason than to feel." Morris was always confident that we should win in the end, and sometimes thought a little punishment really did our people good. When Cornwallis was in Virginia he wrote: "The enemy are scourging the Virginians, at least those of Lower Virginia. This is distressing, but will have some good consequences. In the meantime the delegates of Virginia make as many lamentations as ever Jeremiah did, and to as good purpose perhaps."

The war was drawing to an end. Great Britain had begun the struggle with everything—allies, numbers, wealth—in her favor; but now, toward the close, the odds were all the other way. The French were struggling with her on equal terms for the mastery of the seas; the Spaniards were helping the French, and were bending every energy to carry through successfully the great siege of Gibraltar; the Dutch had joined their ancient enemies, and their fleet fought a battle with the English, which, for bloody indecisiveness, rivalled the actions when Van Tromp and De Ruyter held the Channel against Blake and Monk. In India the name of Hyder Ali had become a very nightmare of horror to the British. In America, the centre of the war, the day had gone conclusively against the island folk. Greene

had doggedly fought and marched his way through the Southern States with his ragged, underfed, badly armed troops; he had been beaten in three obstinate battles, had each time inflicted a greater relative loss than he received, and, after retiring in good order a short distance, had always ended by pursuing his lately victorious foes; at the close of the campaign he had completely reconquered the Southern States by sheer capacity for standing punishment, and had cooped up the remaining British force in Charleston. In the Northern States the British held Newport and New York, but could not penetrate elsewhere; while at Yorktown their ablest general was obliged to surrender his whole army to the overwhelming force brought against him by Washington's masterly strategy.

Yet England, hemmed in by the ring of her foes, fronted them all with a grand courage. In her veins the Berserker blood was up, and she hailed each new enemy with grim delight, exerting to the full her warlike strength. Single-handed she kept them all at bay, and repaid with crippling blows the injuries they had done her. In America alone the tide ran too strongly to be turned. But Holland was stripped of all her colonies; in the East, Sir Eyre Coote beat down Hyder Ali, and taught Moslem and Hindoo alike that they could not shake off the grasp of the iron hands that held India. Rodney won back for his country the supremacy of the ocean in that great sea-fight where he shattered the splendid French navy; and the long siege of Gibraltar closed with the crushing overthrow of the assailants. So, with bloody honor, England ended the most disastrous war she had ever waged.

The war had brought forth many hard fighters, but only one great commander—Washington. For the rest,

on land, Cornwallis, Greene, Rawdon, and possibly Lafayette and Rochambeau, might all rank as fairly good generals, probably in the order named, although many excellent critics place Greene first. At sea, Rodney and the Bailli de Suffren won the honors; the latter stands beside Duquesne and Tourville in the roll of French admirals; while Rodney was a true latter-day buccaneer, as fond of fighting as of plundering, and a first-rate hand at both. Neither ranks with such mighty sea chiefs as Nelson, nor yet with Blake, Farragut, or Tegethof.

All parties were tired of the war; peace was essential to all. But of all, America was most resolute to win what she had fought for; and America had been the most successful so far. English historians—even so generally impartial a writer as Mr. Lecky—are apt greatly to exaggerate our relative exhaustion, and try to prove it by quoting from the American leaders every statement that shows despondency and suffering. If they applied the same rule to their own side, they would come to the conclusion that the British Empire was at that time on the brink of dissolution. Of course we had suffered very heavily, and had blundered badly; but in both respects we were better off than our antagonists. Mr. Lecky is right in bestowing unstinted praise on our diplomatists for the hardihood and success with which they insisted on all our demands being granted; but he is wrong when he says or implies that the military situation did not warrant their attitude. Of all the contestants, America was the most willing to continue the fight rather than yield her rights. Morris expressed the general feeling when he wrote to Jay, on August 6, 1782: "Nobody will be thankful for any peace but a very good one. This *they* should have thought on who made war with the republic. I am among the number

who would be extremely ungrateful for the grant of a bad peace. My public and private character will both concert to render the sentiment coming from me unsuspected. Judge, then, of others, judge of the many-headed fool who can feel no more than his own sorrowing. . . . I wish that while the war lasts it may be real war, and that when peace comes it may be real peace." As to our military efficiency, we may take Washington's word (in a letter to Jay of October 18, 1782): "I am certain it will afford you pleasure to know that our army is better organized, disciplined, and clothed than it has been at any period since the commencement of the war. This you may be assured is the fact."

Another mistake of English historians—again likewise committed by Mr. Lecky—comes in their laying so much stress on the help rendered to the Americans by their allies, while at the same time speaking as if England had none. As a matter of fact, England would have stood no chance at all had the contest been strictly confined to British troops on the one hand, and to the rebellious colonists on the other. There were more German auxiliaries in the British ranks than there were French allies in the American; the loyalists, including the regularly enlisted loyalists as well as the militia who took part in the various Tory uprisings, were probably more numerous still. The withdrawal of all Hessians, Tories, and Indians from the British army would have been cheaply purchased by the loss of our own foreign allies.

The European powers were even a shade more anxious for peace than we were; and to conduct the negotiations for our side, we chose three of our greatest statesmen—Franklin, Adams, and Jay.

Congress, in appointing our commissioners, had, with little regard for the national dignity, given them instructions which, if obeyed, would have rendered them completely subservient to France; for they were directed to undertake nothing in the negotiations without the knowledge and concurrence of the French Cabinet, and in all decisions to be ultimately governed by the advice of that body. Morris fiercely resented such servile subservience, and in a letter to Jay denounced Congress with well-justified warmth, writing: "That the proud should prostitute the very little dignity this poor country is possessed of would be indeed astounding, if we did not know the near alliance between pride and meanness. Men who have too little spirit to demand of their constituents that they do their duty, who have sufficient humility to beg a paltry pittance at the hands of any and every sovereign—such men will always be ready to pay the price which vanity shall demand from the vain." Jay promptly persuaded his colleagues to unite with him in disregarding the instructions of Congress on this point; had he not done so, the dignity of our government would, as he wrote Morris, "have been in the dust." Franklin was at first desirous of yielding obedience to the command, but Adams immediately joined Jay in repudiating it.

We had waged war against Britain, with France and Spain as allies; but in making peace we had to strive for our rights against our friends almost as much as against our enemies. There was much generous and disinterested enthusiasm for America among Frenchmen individually; but the French Government, with which alone we were to deal in making peace, had acted throughout from purely selfish motives, and in reality did not care an atom for American rights. We owed

France no more gratitude for taking our part than she owed us for giving her an opportunity of advancing her own interests, and striking a severe blow at an old-time enemy and rival. As for Spain, she disliked us quite as much as she did England.

The peace negotiations brought all this out very clearly. The great French minister, Vergennes, who dictated the policy of his court all through the contest, cared nothing for the Revolutionary colonists themselves; but he was bent upon securing them their independence, so as to weaken England, and he was also bent upon keeping them from gaining too much strength, so that they might always remain dependent allies of France. He wished to establish the "balance-of-power" system in America. The American commissioners he at first despised for their blunt, truthful straightforwardness, which he, trained in the school of deceit, and a thorough believer in every kind of finesse and double-dealing, mistook for boorishness; later on, he learned to his chagrin that they were able as well as honest, and that their resolution, skill, and far-sightedness made them, where their own deepest interests were concerned, overmatches for the subtle diplomats of Europe.

America, then, was determined to secure not only independence, but also a chance to grow into a great continental nation; she wished her boundaries fixed at the Great Lakes and the Mississippi; she also asked for the free navigation of the latter to the Gulf, and for a share in the fisheries. Spain did not even wish that we should be made independent; she hoped to be compensated at our expense for her failure to take Gibraltar; and she desired that we should be kept so weak as to hinder us from being aggressive. Her fear of us,

by the way, was perfectly justifiable, for the greatest part of our present territory lies within what were nominally Spanish limits a hundred years ago. France, as the head of a great coalition, wanted to keep on good terms with both her allies; but, as Gérard, the French minister at Washington, said, if France had to choose between the two, "the decision would not be in favor of the United States." She wished to secure for America independence, but she wished also to keep the new nation so weak that it would "feel the need of sureties, allies, and protectors." France desired to exclude our people from the fisheries, to deprive us of half our Territories by making the Alleghanies our western boundaries, and to secure to Spain the undisputed control of the navigation of the Mississippi. It was not to the interest of France and Spain that we should be a great and formidable people, and very naturally they would not help us to become one. There is no need of blaming them for their conduct, but it would have been rank folly to have been guided by their wishes. Our true policy was admirably summed up by Jay in his letters to Livingston, where he says: "Let us be honest and grateful to France, but let us think for ourselves. . . . Since we have assumed a place in the political firmament, let us move like a primary and not a secondary planet." Fortunately, England's own self-interest made her play into our hands; as Fox put it, it was necessary for her to "insist in the strongest manner that, if America is independent, she must be so of the whole world. No secret, tacit, or ostensible connection with France."

Our statesmen won; we got all we asked, as much to the astonishment of France as of England; we proved even more successful in diplomacy than in arms. As Fox had hoped, we became independent not only of

England, but of all the world; we were not entangled as a dependent subordinate in the policy of France, nor did we sacrifice our western boundary to Spain. It was a great triumph—greater than any that had been won by our soldiers. Franklin had a comparatively small share in gaining it; the glory of carrying through successfully the most important treaty we ever negotiated belongs to Jay and Adams, and especially to Jay.

CHAPTER VI

THE FORMATION OF THE NATIONAL CONSTITUTION

Before peace was established, Morris had been appointed a commissioner to treat for the exchange of prisoners. Nothing came of his efforts, however, the British and Americans being utterly unable to come to any agreement. Both sides had been greatly exasperated—the British by the Americans' breach of faith about Burgoyne's troops, and the Americans by the inhuman brutality with which their captive countrymen had been treated. An amusing feature of the affair was a conversation between Morris and the British general, Dalrymple, wherein the former assured the latter rather patronizingly that the British "still remained a great people, a very great people," and that "they would undoubtedly still hold their rank in Europe." He would have been surprised had he known not only that the stubborn island folk were destined soon to hold a higher rank in Europe than ever before, but that from their loins other nations, broad as continents, were to spring, so that the South Seas should become an English ocean, and that over a fourth of the world's surface there should be spoken the tongue of Pitt and Washington.

No sooner was peace declared, and the immediate and pressing danger removed, than the confederation relapsed into a loose knot of communities, as quarrelsome as they were contemptible. The States'-rights men for the moment had things all their own way, and speedily reduced us to the level afterward reached by

the South American republics. Each commonwealth set up for itself, and tried to oppress its neighbors; not one had a creditable history for the next four years; while the career of Rhode Island in particular can only be properly described as infamous. We refused to pay our debts, we would not even pay our army; and mob violence flourished rankly. As a natural result, the European powers began to take advantage of our weakness and division.

All our great men saw the absolute need of establishing a National Union—not a league or a confederation—if the country was to be saved. None felt this more strongly than Morris, and no one was more hopeful of the final result. Jay had written to him as to the need of "raising and maintaining a national spirit in America"; and he wrote in reply, at different times: "Much of convulsion will yet ensue, yet it must terminate in giving to government that power without which government is but a name. . . . This country has never yet been known to Europe, and God knows whether it ever will be. To England it is less known than to any other part of Europe, because they constantly view it through a medium of either prejudice or faction. True it is that the general government wants energy, and equally true it is that the want will eventually be supplied. A national spirit is the natural result of national existence; *and although some of the present generation may feel the result of colonial oppositions of opinion, that generation will die away and give place to a race of Americans.** On this occasion, as on others, Great Britain is our best friend; and, by seizing the critical moment when we were about to divide, she has shown us the dreadful consequences of division.

* The italics are mine.

. . . Indeed, my friend, nothing can do us so much good as to convince the eastern and southern States how necessary it is to give proper force to the federal government, and nothing will so soon operate that conviction as foreign efforts to restrain the navigation of the one and the commerce of the other." The last sentence referred to the laws aimed at our trade by Great Britain, and by other powers as well—symptoms of outside hostility which made us at once begin to draw together again.

Money troubles grew apace, and produced the usual crop of crude theories and of vicious and dishonest legislation in accordance therewith. Lawless outbreaks became common, and in Massachusetts culminated in actual rebellion. The mass of the people were rendered hostile to any closer union by their ignorance, their jealousy, and the general particularistic bent of their minds—this last being merely a vicious graft on, or rather outgrowth of, the love of freedom inborn in the race. Their leaders were enthusiasts of pure purpose and unsteady mental vision; they were followed by the mass of designing politicians, who feared that their importance would be lost if their sphere of action should be enlarged. Among these leaders the three most important were, in New York, George Clinton, and, in Massachusetts and Virginia, two much greater men—Samuel Adams and Patrick Henry. All three had done excellent service at the beginning of the Revolutionary troubles. Patrick Henry lived to redeem himself, almost in his last hour, by the noble stand he took in aid of Washington against the Democratic nullification agitation of Jefferson and Madison; but the usefulness of each of the other two was limited to the early portion of his career.

Like every other true patriot and statesman, Morris did all in his power to bring into one combination the varied interests favorable to the formation of a government that should be strong and responsible as well as free. The public creditors and the soldiers of the army —whose favorite toasts were, "A hoop to the barrel," and "Cement to the union"—were the two classes most sensible of the advantages of such a government; and to each of these Morris addressed himself when he proposed to consolidate the public debt, both to private citizens and to the soldiers, and to make it a charge on the United States, and not on the several separate States.

In consequence of the activity and ability with which he advocated a firmer union, the extreme States'-rights men were especially hostile to him; and certain of their number assailed him with bitter malignity, both then and afterward. One accusation was, that he had improper connections with the public creditors. This was a pure slander, absolutely without foundation, and not supported by even the pretense of proof. Another accusation was that he favored the establishment of a monarchy. This was likewise entirely untrue. Morris was not a sentimental political theorist; he was an eminently practical—that is, useful—statesman, who saw with unusual clearness that each people must have a government suited to its own individual character, and to the stage of political and social development it had reached. He realized that a nation must be governed according to the actual needs and capacities of its citizens, not according to any abstract theory or set of ideal principles. He would have dismissed with contemptuous laughter the ideas of those Americans who at the present day believe that Anglo-Saxon democracy can

be applied successfully to a half-savage negroid people in Hayti, or of those Englishmen who consider seriously the proposition to renovate Turkey by giving her representative institutions and a parliamentary government. He understood and stated that a monarchy "did not consist with the taste and temper of the people" in America, and he believed in establishing a form of government that did. Like almost every other statesman of the day, the perverse obstinacy of the extreme particularist section at times made him downhearted, and caused him almost to despair of a good government being established; and like every sensible man he would have preferred almost any strong, orderly government to the futile anarchy toward which the ultra States'-rights men or separatists tended. Had these last ever finally obtained the upper hand, either in Revolutionary or post-Revolutionary times, either in 1787 or 1861, the fact would have shown conclusively that Americans were unfitted for republicanism and self-government. An orderly monarchy would certainly be preferable to a republic of the epileptic Spanish-American type. The extreme doctrinaires, who are fiercest in declaiming in favor of freedom, are in reality its worst foes, far more dangerous than any absolute monarchy ever can be. When liberty becomes license, some form of one-man power is not far distant.

The one great reason for our having succeeded as no other people ever has, is to be found in that common sense which has enabled us to preserve the largest possible individual freedom on the one hand, while showing an equally remarkable capacity for combination on the other. We have committed plenty of faults, but we have seen and remedied them. Our very doctrinaires have usually acted much more practically than they

have talked. Jefferson, when in power, adopted most of the Federalist theories, and became markedly hostile to the nullification movements at whose birth he had himself officiated. We have often blundered badly in the beginning, but we have always come out well in the end. The Dutch, when they warred for freedom from Spanish rule, showed as much short-sighted selfishness and bickering jealousy as even our own Revolutionary ancestors, and only a part remained faithful to the end: as a result, but one section won independence, while the Netherlands were divided, and never grasped the power that should have been theirs. As for the Spanish-Americans, they split up hopelessly almost before they were free, and, though they bettered their condition a little, yet lost nine-tenths of what they had gained. Scotland and Ireland, when independent, were nests of savages. All the follies our forefathers committed can be paralleled elsewhere, but their successes are unique.

So it was in the few years immediately succeeding the peace by which we won our independence. The mass of the people wished for no closer union than was to be found in a lax confederation; but they had the good sense to learn the lesson taught by the weakness and lawlessness they saw around them; they reluctantly made up their minds to the need of a stronger government, and when they had once come to their decision, neither demagogue nor doctrinaire could swerve them from it.

The national convention to form a constitution met in May, 1787; and rarely in the world's history has there been a deliberative body which contained so many remarkable men, or produced results so lasting and far-reaching. The Congress whose members signed the

Declaration of Independence had but cleared the ground on which the framers of the Constitution were to build. Among the delegates in attendance, easily first stood Washington and Franklin—two of that great American trio in which Lincoln is the third. Next came Hamilton from New York, having as colleagues a couple of mere obstructionists sent by the Clintonians to handicap him. From Pennsylvania came Robert Morris and Gouverneur Morris; from Virginia, Madison; from South Carolina, Rutledge and the Pinckneys; and so on through the other States. Some of the most noted statesmen were absent, however. Adams and Jefferson were abroad. Jay was acting as secretary for foreign affairs, in which capacity, by the way, he had shown most unlooked-for weakness in yielding to Spanish demands about the Mississippi.

Two years after taking part in the proceedings of the American Constitutional Convention, Morris witnessed the opening of the States General of France. He thoroughly appreciated the absolute and curious contrast offered by these two bodies, each so big with fate for all mankind. The men who predominated in and shaped the actions of the first belonged to a type not uncommonly brought forth by a people already accustomed to freedom at a crisis in the struggle to preserve or extend its liberties. During the past few centuries this type had appeared many times among the liberty-loving nations who dwelt on the shores of the Baltic and the North Sea; and our forefathers represented it in its highest and most perfect shapes. It is a type only to be found among men already trained to govern themselves as well as others. The American statesmen were the kinsfolk and fellows of Hampden and Pym, of William the Silent and John of Barneveldt. Save love of

freedom, they had little in common with the closet philosophers, the enthusiastic visionaries, and the selfish demagogues who in France helped pull up the floodgates of an all-swallowing torrent. They were great men; but it was less the greatness of mere genius than that springing from the union of strong, virile qualities with steadfast devotion to a high ideal. In certain respects they were ahead of all their European compeers; yet they preserved virtues forgotten or sneered at by the contemporaneous generation of transatlantic leaders. They wrought for the future as surely as did the French Jacobins; but their spirit was the spirit of the Long Parliament. They were resolute to free themselves from the tyranny of man; but they had not unlearned the reverence felt by their fathers for their fathers' God. They were sincerely religious. The advanced friends of freedom abroad scoffed at religion, and would have laughed outright at a proposition to gain help for their cause by prayer; but to the founders of our Constitution, when matters were at a deadlock, and the outcome looked almost hopeless, it seemed a most fit and proper thing that one of the chief of their number should propose to invoke to aid them a wisdom greater than the wisdom of human beings. Even those among their descendants who no longer share their trusting faith may yet well do regretful homage to a religious spirit so deep-rooted and so strongly tending to bring out a pure and high morality. The statesmen who met in 1787 were earnestly patriotic. They unselfishly desired the welfare of their countrymen. They were cool, resolute men, of strong convictions, with clear insight into the future. They were thoroughly acquainted with the needs of the community for which they were to act. Above all, they possessed that inestimable quality, so

characteristic of their race, hard-headed common sense. Their theory of government was a very high one; but they understood perfectly that it had to be accommodated to the shortcomings of the average citizen. Small, indeed, was their resemblance to the fiery orators and brilliant pamphleteers of the States General. They were emphatically good men; they were no less emphatically practical men. They would have scorned Mirabeau as a scoundrel; they would have despised Sieyès as a vain and impractical theorist.

The deliberations of the convention in their result illustrated in a striking manner the truth of the American principle, that—for deliberative, not executive, purposes—the wisdom of many men is worth more than the wisdom of any one man. The Constitution that the members assembled in convention finally produced was not only the best possible one for America at that time, but it was also, in spite of its shortcomings, and taking into account its fitness for our own people and conditions, as well as its accordance with the principles of abstract right, probably the best that any nation has ever had, while it was beyond question a very much better one than any single member could have prepared. The particularist statesmen would have practically denied us any real union or efficient executive power; while there was hardly a Federalist member who would not, in his anxiety to avoid the evils from which we were suffering, have given us a government so centralized and aristocratic that it would have been utterly unsuited to a proud, liberty-loving, and essentially democratic race, and would have infallibly provoked a tremendous reactionary revolt.

It is impossible to read through the debates of the convention without being struck by the innumerable

shortcomings of each individual plan proposed by the several members, as divulged in their speeches, when compared with the plan finally adopted. Had the result been in accordance with the views of the strong-government men like Hamilton on the one hand, or of the weak-government men like Franklin on the other, it would have been equally disastrous for the country. The men who afterward naturally became the chiefs of the Federalist party, and who included in their number the bulk of the great Revolutionary leaders, were the ones to whom we mainly owe our present form of government; certainly we owe them more, both on this and on other points, than we do their rivals, the after-time Democrats. Yet there were some articles of faith in the creed of the latter so essential to our national well-being, and yet so counter to the prejudices of the Federalists, that it was inevitable they should triumph in the end. Jefferson led the Democrats to victory only when he had learned to acquiesce thoroughly in some of the fundamental principles of Federalism, and the government of himself and his successors was good chiefly in so far as it followed out the theories of the Hamiltonians; while Hamilton and the Federalists fell from power because they could not learn the one great truth taught by Jefferson—that in America a statesman should trust the people, and should endeavor to secure to each man all possible individual liberty, confident that he will use it aright. The old-school Jeffersonian theorists believed in "a strong people and a weak government." Lincoln was the first who showed how a strong people might have a strong government and yet remain the freest on the earth. He seized—half unwittingly—all that was best and wisest in the traditions of Federalism; he was the true successor of the Federalist

leaders; but he grafted on their system a profound belief that the great heart of the nation beat for truth, honor, and liberty.

This fact, that in 1787 all the thinkers of the day drew out plans that in some respects went very wide of the mark, must be kept in mind, or else we shall judge each particular thinker with undue harshness when we examine his utterances without comparing them with those of his fellows. But one partial exception can be made. In the Constitutional Convention Madison, a moderate Federalist, was the man who, of all who were there, saw things most clearly as they were, and whose theories most closely corresponded with the principles finally adopted; and although even he was at first dissatisfied with the result, and both by word and by action interpreted the Constitution in widely different ways at different times, still this was Madison's time of glory: he was one of the statesmen who do extremely useful work, but only at some single given crisis. While the Constitution was being formed and adopted, he stood in the very front; but in his later career he sunk his own individuality, and became a mere pale shadow of Jefferson.

Morris played a very prominent part in the convention. He was a ready speaker, and among all the able men present there was probably no such really brilliant thinker. In the debates he spoke more often than any one else, although Madison was not far behind him; and his speeches betrayed, but with marked and exaggerated emphasis, both the virtues and the shortcomings of the Federalist school of thought. They show us, too, why he never rose to the first rank of statesmen. His keen, masterful mind, his far-sightedness, and the force and subtlety of his reasoning were all marred by

his incurable cynicism and deep-rooted distrust of mankind. He throughout appears as *advocatus diaboli;* he puts the lowest interpretation upon every act, and frankly avows his disbelief in all generous and unselfish motives. His continual allusions to the overpowering influence of the baser passions, and to their mastery of the human race at all times, drew from Madison, although the two men generally acted together, a protest against his "forever inculcating the utter political depravity of men, and the necessity for opposing one vice and interest as the only possible check to another vice and interest."

Morris championed a strong national government, wherein he was right; but he also championed a system of class representation, leaning toward aristocracy, wherein he was wrong. Not Hamilton himself was a firmer believer in the national idea. His one great object was to secure a powerful and lasting Union, instead of a loose federal league. It must be remembered that in the convention the term "federal" was used in exactly the opposite sense to the one in which it was taken afterward; that is, it was used as the antithesis of "national," not as its synonym. The States'-rights men used it to express a system of government such as that of the old federation of the thirteen colonies; while their opponents called themselves Nationalists, and only took the title of Federalists after the Constitution had been formed, and then simply because the name was popular with the masses. They thus appropriated their adversaries' party name, bestowing it on the organization most hostile to their adversaries' party theories. Similarly, the term "Republican party," which was originally in our history merely another name for the Democracy, has in the end been adopted by the chief opponents of the latter.

The difficulties for the convention to surmount seemed insuperable; on almost every question that came up, there were clashing interests. Strong government and weak government, pure democracy or a modified aristocracy, small States and large States, North and South, slavery and freedom, agricultural sections as against commercial sections—on each of twenty points the delegates split into hostile camps, that could only be reconciled by concessions from both sides. The Constitution was not one compromise; it was a bundle of compromises, all needful.

Morris, like every other member of the convention, sometimes took the right and sometimes the wrong side on the successive issues that arose. But on the most important one of all he made no error; and he commands our entire sympathy for his thoroughgoing nationalism. As was to be expected, he had no regard whatever for States' rights. He wished to deny to the small States the equal representation in the Senate finally allowed them; and he was undoubtedly right theoretically. No good argument can be adduced in support of the present system on that point. Still, it has thus far worked no harm; the reason being that our States have merely artificial boundaries, while those of small population have hitherto been distributed pretty evenly among the different sections, so that they have been split up like the others on every important issue, and thus have never been arrayed against the rest of the country.

Though Morris and his side were defeated in their efforts to have the States represented proportionally in the Senate, yet they carried their point as to representation in the House. Also, on the general question of making a national government, as distinguished from a league or federation, the really vital point, their triumph was complete. The Constitution they drew up and had

adopted no more admitted of legal or peaceable rebellion—whether called secession or nullification—on the part of the State than on the part of a county or an individual.

Morris expressed his own views with his usual clear-cut, terse vigor when he asserted that "state attachments and state importance had been the bane of the country," and that he came, not as a mere delegate from one section, but "as a representative of America—a representative in some degree of the whole human race, for the whole human race would be affected by the outcome of the convention." And he poured out the flood of his biting scorn on those gentlemen who came there "to truck and bargain for their respective States," asking what man there was who could tell with certainty the State wherein he—and even more wherein his children—would live in the future; and reminding the small States, with cavalier indifference, that, "if they did not like the Union, no matter—they would have to come in, and that was all there was about it; for if persuasion did not unite the country, then the sword would." His correct language and distinct enunciation—to which Madison has borne witness—allowed his grim truths to carry their full weight; and he brought them home to his hearers with a rough, almost startling, earnestness and directness. Many of those present must have winced when he told them that it would matter nothing to America "if all the charters and constitutions of the States were thrown into the fire, and all the demagogues into the ocean," and asserted that "any particular State *ought* to be injured, for the sake of a majority of the people, in case its conduct showed that it deserved it." He held that we should create a national government, to be the one and only supreme power in the land—one

which, unlike a mere federal league, such as we then lived under, should have complete and compulsive operation, and he instanced the examples as well of Greece as of Germany and the United Netherlands, to prove that local jurisdiction destroyed every tie of nationality.

It shows the boldness of the experiment in which we were engaged, that we were forced to take all other nations, whether dead or living, as warnings, not examples; whereas, since we succeeded, we have served as a pattern to be copied, either wholly or in part, by every other people that has followed in our steps. Before our own experience, each similar attempt, save perhaps on the smallest scale, had been a failure. Where so many other nations teach by their mistakes, we are among the few who teach by their successes.

Be it noted also that, the doctrinaires to the contrary notwithstanding, we proved that a strong central government was perfectly compatible with absolute democracy. Indeed, the separatist spirit does not lead to true democratic freedom. Anarchy is the handmaiden of tyranny. Of all the States, South Carolina has shown herself (at least throughout the greater part of the present century) to be the most aristocratic, and the most wedded to the separatist spirit. The German masses were never so ground down by oppression as when the little German principalities were most independent of each other and of any central authority.

Morris believed in letting the United States interfere to put down a rebellion in a State, even though the executive of the State himself should be at the head of it; and he was supported in his views by Pinckney, the ablest member of the brilliant and useful but unfortunately short-lived school of South Carolina Federalists. Pinckney was a thoroughgoing Nationalist; he wished

to go a good deal further than the convention actually went in giving the central government complete control. Thus he proposed that Congress should have power to negative by a two-thirds vote all State laws inconsistent with the harmony of the Union. Madison also wished to give Congress a veto over State legislation. Morris believed that a national law should be allowed to repeal any State law, and that Congress should legislate in all cases where the laws of the States conflicted among themselves.

Yet Morris, on the very question of nationalism, himself showed the narrowest, blindest, and least excusable sectional jealousy on one point. He felt as an American for all the Union, as it then existed; but he feared and dreaded the growth of the Union in the West, the very place where it was inevitable, as well as in the highest degree desirable, that the greatest growth should take place. He actually desired the convention to commit the criminal folly of attempting to provide that the West should always be kept subordinate to the East. Fortunately he failed; but the mere attempt casts the gravest discredit alike on his far-sightedness and on his reputation as a statesman. It is impossible to understand how one who was usually so cool and clear-headed an observer could have blundered so flagrantly on a point hardly less vital than the establishment of the Union itself. Indeed, had his views been carried through, they would in the end have nullified all the good bestowed by the Union. In speaking against State jealousy, he had shown its foolishness by observing that no man could tell in what State his children would dwell; and the folly of the speaker himself was made quite as clear by his not perceiving that their most likely dwelling-place was in the West. This jeal-

ousy of the West was even more discreditable to the Northeast than the jealousy of America had been to England; and it continued strong, especially in New England, for very many years. It was a mean and unworthy feeling; and it was greatly to the credit of the Southerners that they shared it only to a very small extent. The South, in fact, originally was in heartiest sympathy with the West; it was not until the middle of the present century that the country beyond the Alleghanies became preponderatingly Northern in sentiment. In the Constitutional Convention itself, Butler, of South Carolina, pointed out "that the people and strength of America were evidently tending westwardly and southwestwardly."

Morris wished to discriminate against the West by securing to the Atlantic States the perpetual control of the Union. He brought this idea up again and again, insisting that we should reserve to ourselves the right to put conditions on the Western States when we should admit them. He dwelt at length on the danger of throwing the preponderance of influence into the Western scale; stating his dread of the "back members," who were always the most ignorant, and the opponents of all good measures. He foretold with fear that some day the people of the West would outnumber the people of the East, and he wished to put it in the power of the latter to keep a majority of the votes in their own hands. Apparently he did not see that, if the West once became as populous as he predicted, its legislators would forthwith cease to be "back members." The futility of his fears, and still more of his remedies, was so evident that the convention paid very little heed to either.

On one point, however, his anticipations of harm were reasonable, and indeed afterward came true in

part. He insisted that the West, or interior, would join the South and force us into a war with some European power, wherein the benefits would accrue to them and the harm to the Northeast. The attitude of the South and West already clearly foreshadowed a struggle with Spain for the Mississippi valley; and such a struggle would surely have come, either with the French or Spaniards, had we failed to secure the territory in question by peaceful purchase. As it was, the realization of Morris's prophecy was only put off for a few years; the South and West brought on the War of 1812, wherein the East was the chief sufferer.

On the question as to whether the Constitution should be made absolutely democratic or not, Morris took the conservative side. On the suffrage his views are perfectly defensible: he believed that it should be limited to freeholders. He rightly considered the question as to how widely it should be extended to be one of expediency merely. It is simply idle folly to talk of suffrage as being an "inborn" or "natural" right. There are enormous communities totally unfit for its exercise; while true universal suffrage never has been, and never will be, seriously advocated by any one. There must always be an age limit, and such a limit must necessarily be purely arbitrary. The wildest Democrat of Revolutionary times did not dream of doing away with the restrictions of race and sex which kept most American citizens from the ballot-box; and there is certainly much less abstract right in a system which limits the suffrage to people of a certain color than there is in one which limits it to people who come up to a given standard of thrift and intelligence. On the other hand, our experience has not proved that men of wealth make any better use of their ballots than do,

for instance, mechanics and other handicraftsmen. No plan could be adopted so perfect as to be free from all drawbacks. On the whole, however, and taking our country in its length and breadth, manhood suffrage has worked well, better than would have been the case with any other system; but even here there are certain localities where its results have been evil, and must simply be accepted as the blemishes inevitably attendant upon, and marring, any effort to carry out a scheme that will be widely applicable.

Morris contended that his plan would work no novel or great hardship, as the people in several States were already accustomed to freehold suffrage. He considered the freeholders to be the best guardians of liberty, and maintained that the restriction of the right to them was only creating a necessary safeguard "against the dangerous influence of those people, without property or principle, with whom, in the end, our country, like all other countries, was sure to abound." He did not believe that the ignorant and dependent could be trusted to vote. Madison supported him heartily, likewise thinking the freeholders the safest guardians of our rights; he indulged in some gloomy (and fortunately hitherto unverified) forebodings as to our future, which sound strangely coming from one who was afterward an especial pet of the Jeffersonian democracy. He said: "In future times a great majority of the people will be without landed or any other property. They will then either combine under the influence of their common situation—in which case the rights of property and the public liberty will not be safe in their hands—or, as is more probable, they will become the tools of opulence and ambition."

Morris also enlarged on this last idea. "Give the

votes to people who have no property, and they will sell them to the rich," said he. When taunted with his aristocratic tendencies, he answered that he had long ceased to be the dupe of words, that the mere sound of the name "aristocracy" had no terrors for him, but that he did fear lest harm should result to the people from the unacknowledged existence of the very thing they feared to mention. As he put it, there never was or would be a civilized society without an aristocracy, and his endeavor was to keep it as much as possible from doing mischief. He thus professed to be opposed to the existence of an aristocracy, but convinced that it would exist anyhow, and that therefore the best thing to be done was to give it a recognized place, while clipping its wings so as to prevent its working harm. In pursuance of this theory, he elaborated a wild plan, the chief feature of which was the provision for an aristocratic Senate, and a popular or democratic house, which were to hold each other in check, and thereby prevent either party from doing damage. He believed that the senators should be appointed by the national Executive, who should fill up the vacancies that occurred. To make the Upper House effective as a checking branch, it should be so constituted as to have a personal interest in checking the other branch; it should be a Senate for life, it should be rich, it should be aristocratic. He continued: It would then do wrong? He believed so; he hoped so. The rich would strive to enslave the rest; they always did. The proper security against them was to form them into a separate interest. The two forces would then control each other. By thus combining and setting apart the aristocratic interest, the popular interest would also be combined against it. There would be mutual check and mutual security. If,

on the contrary, the rich and poor were allowed to mingle, then, if the country were commercial, an oligarchy would be established; and if it were not, an unlimited democracy would ensue. It was best to look truth in the face. The loaves and fishes would be needed to bribe demagogues; while as for the people, if left to themselves, they would never act from reason alone. The rich would take advantage of their passions, and the result would be either a violent aristocracy, or a more violent despotism.—The speech containing these extraordinary sentiments, which do no particular credit to either Morris's head or heart, is given in substance by Madison in the "Debates." Madison's report is undoubtedly correct, for, after writing it, he showed it to the speaker himself, who made but one or two verbal alterations.

Morris applied an old theory in a new way when he proposed to make "taxation proportional to representation" throughout the Union. He considered the preservation of property as being the distinguishing object of civilization, as liberty was sufficiently guaranteed even by savagery; and therefore he held that the representation in the Senate should be according to property as well as numbers. But when this proposition was defeated, he declined to support one making property qualifications for congressmen, remarking that such were proper for the electors rather than the elected.

His views as to the power and functions of the national Executive were in the main sound, and he succeeded in having most of them embodied in the Constitution. He wished to have the President hold office during good behavior; and, though this was negatived, he succeeded in having him made re-eligible to the position. He was instrumental in giving him a qualified veto over legis-

lation, and in providing for his impeachment for misconduct; and also in having him made commander-in-chief of the forces of the Republic, and in allowing him the appointment of governmental officers. The especial service he rendered, however, was his successful opposition to the plan whereby the President was to be elected by the legislature. This proposition he combated with all his strength, showing that it would take away greatly from the dignity of the Executive, and would render his election a matter of cabal and faction, "like the election of the pope by a conclave of cardinals." He contended that the President should be chosen by the people at large, by the citizens of the United States, acting through electors whom they had picked out. He showed the probability that in such a case the people would unite upon a man of continental reputation, as the influence of designing demagogues and tricksters is generally powerful in proportion as the limits within which they work are narrow; and the importance of the stake would make all men inform themselves thoroughly as to the characters and capacities of those who were contending for it; and he flatly denied the statements, that were made in evident good faith, to the effect that in a general election each State would cast its vote for its own favorite citizen. He inclined to regard the President in the light of a tribune chosen by the people to watch over the legislature; and giving him the appointing power, he believed, would force him to make good use of it, owing to his sense of responsibility to the people at large, who would be directly affected by its exercise, and who could and would hold him accountable for its abuse.

On the judiciary his views were also sound. He upheld the power of the judges, and maintained that they

should have absolute decision as to the constitutionality of any law. By this means he hoped to provide against the encroachments of the popular branch of the government, the one from which danger was to be feared, as "virtuous citizens will often act as legislators in a way of which they would, as private individuals, afterward be ashamed." He wisely disapproved of low salaries for the judges, showing that the amounts must be fixed from time to time in accordance with the manner and style of living in the country; and that good work on the bench, where it was especially needful, like good work everywhere else, could only be insured by a high rate of recompense. On the other hand, he approved of introducing into the national Constitution the foolish New York State inventions of a Council of Revision and an Executive Council.

His ideas of the duties and powers of Congress were likewise very proper on the whole. Most citizens of the present day will agree with him that "the excess rather than the deficiency of laws is what we have to dread." He opposed the hurtful provision which requires that each congressman should be a resident of his own district, urging that congressmen represented the people at large, as well as their own small localities; and he also objected to making officers of the army and navy ineligible. He laid much stress on the propriety of passing navigation acts to encourage American bottoms and seamen, as a navy was essential to our security, and the shipping business was always one that stood in peculiar need of public patronage. Also, like Hamilton and most other Federalists, he favored a policy of encouraging domestic manufactures. Incidentally he approved of Congress having power to lay an embargo, although he has elsewhere recorded his views as to the

general futility of such kinds of "commercial warfare." He believed in having a uniform bankruptcy law; approved of abolishing all religious tests as qualifications for office, and was utterly opposed to the "rotation-in-office" theory.

One curious incident in the convention was the sudden outcropping, even thus early, of a "Native American" movement against all foreigners, which was headed by Butler, of South Carolina, who himself was of Irish parentage. He strenuously insisted that no foreigners whosoever should be admitted to our councils—a rather odd proposition, considering that it would have excluded quite a number of the eminent men he was then addressing. Pennsylvania in particular—whose array of native talent has always been far from imposing—had a number of foreigners among her delegates, and loudly opposed the proposition, as did New York. These States wished that there should be no discrimination whatever between native and foreign born citizens; but finally a compromise was agreed to, by which the latter were excluded only from the presidency, but were admitted to all other rights after a seven years' residence—a period that was certainly none too long.

A much more serious struggle took place over the matter of slavery, quite as important then as ever, for at that time the negroes were a fifth of our population, instead of, as now, an eighth. The question, as it came before the convention, had several sides to it; the especial difficulty arising over the representation of the slave States in Congress, and the importation of additional slaves from Africa. No one proposed to abolish slavery offhand; but an influential though small number of delegates, headed by Morris, recognized it as a terrible evil, and were very loath either to allow the

South additional representation for the slaves, or to permit the foreign trade in them to go on. When the Southern members banded together on the issue, and made it evident that it was the one which they regarded as almost the most important of all, Morris attacked them in a telling speech, stating with his usual boldness facts that most Northerners only dared hint at, and summing up with the remark that, if he was driven to the dilemma of doing injustice to the Southern States or to human nature, he would have to do it to the former; certainly he would not encourage the slave trade by allowing representation for negroes. Afterward he characterized the proportional representation of the blacks even more strongly, as being "a bribe for the importation of slaves."

In advocating the proposal, first made by Hamilton, that the representation should in all cases be proportioned to the number of free inhabitants, Morris showed the utter lack of logic in the Virginian proposition, which was that the slave States should have additional representation to the extent of three-fifths of their negroes. If negroes were to be considered as inhabitants, then they ought to be added in their entire number; if they were to be considered as property, then they ought to be counted only if all other wealth was likewise included. The position of the Southerners was ridiculous: he tore their arguments to shreds; but he was powerless to alter the fact that they were doggedly determined to carry their point, while most of the Northern members cared comparatively little about it.

In another speech he painted in the blackest colors the unspeakable misery and wrong wrought by slavery, and showed the blight it brought upon the land. "It was the curse of Heaven on the States where it pre-

vailed." He contrasted the prosperity and happiness of the Northern States with the misery and poverty which overspread the barren wastes of those where slaves were numerous. "Every step you take through the great region of slavery presents a desert widening with the increasing number of these wretched beings." He indignantly protested against the Northern States being bound to march their militia for the defense of the Southern States against the very slaves of whose existence the Northern men complained. "He would sooner submit himself to a tax for paying for all the negroes in the United States than saddle posterity with such a Constitution."

Some of the high-minded Virginian statesmen were quite as vigorous as he was in their denunciation of the system. One of them, George Mason, portrayed the effect of slavery upon the people at large with bitter emphasis, and denounced the slave traffic as "infernal," and slavery as a national sin that would be punished by a national calamity—stating therein the exact and terrible truth. In shameful contrast, many of the Northerners championed the institution; in particular, Oliver Ellsworth, of Connecticut, whose name should be branded with infamy because of the words he then uttered. He actually advocated the free importation of negroes into the south Atlantic States, because the slaves "died so fast in the sickly rice-swamps" that it was necessary ever to bring fresh ones to labor and perish in the places of their predecessors; and, with a brutal cynicism, peculiarly revolting from its mercantile baseness, he brushed aside the question of morality as irrelevant, asking his hearers to pay heed only to the fact that "what enriches the part enriches the whole."

The Virginians were opposed to the slave trade; but

South Carolina and Georgia made it a condition of their coming into the Union. It was accordingly agreed that it should be allowed for a limited time—twelve years; and this was afterward extended to twenty by a bargain made by Maryland and the three south Atlantic States with the New England States, the latter getting in return the help of the former to alter certain provisions respecting commerce. One of the main industries of the New England of that day was the manufacture of rum; and its citizens cared more for their distilleries than for all the slaves held in bondage throughout Christendom. The rum was made from molasses which they imported from the West Indies, and they carried there in return the fish taken by their great fishing fleets; they also carried the slaves into the Southern ports. Their commerce was what they especially relied on; and to gain support for it they were perfectly willing to make terms with even such a black Mammon of unrighteousness as the Southern slaveholding system. Throughout the contest, Morris and a few other stout antislavery men are the only ones who appear to advantage; the Virginians, who were honorably anxious to minimize the evils of slavery, come next; then the other Southerners who allowed pressing self-interest to overcome their scruples; and, last of all, the New Englanders whom a comparatively trivial self-interest made the willing allies of the extreme slaveholders. These last were the only Northerners who yielded anything to the Southern slaveholders that was not absolutely necessary; and yet they were the forefathers of the most determined and effective foes that slavery ever had.

As already said, the Southerners stood firm on the slave question: it was the one which perhaps more than any other offered the most serious obstacle to a settle-

ment. Madison pointed out "that the real difference lay, not between the small States and the large, but between the Northern and the Southern States. The institution of slavery and its consequences formed the real line of discrimination." To talk of this kind Morris at first answered hotly enough: "He saw that the Southern gentlemen would not be satisfied unless they saw the way open to their gaining a majority in the public councils. . . . If [the distinction they set up between the North and South] was real, instead of attempting to blend incompatible things, let them at once take a friendly leave of each other." He afterward went back from this position, and agreed to the compromise by which the slaves were to add, by three-fifths of their number, to the representation of their masters, and the slave trade was to be allowed for a certain number of years, and prohibited forever after. He showed his usual straightforward willingness to call things by their right names in desiring to see "slavery" named outright in the Constitution, instead of being characterized with cowardly circumlocution, as was actually done.

In finally yielding and assenting to a compromise, he was perfectly right. The crazy talk about the iniquity of consenting to any recognition of slavery whatever in the Constitution is quite beside the mark; and it is equally irrelevant to assert that the so-called "compromises" were not properly compromises at all, because there were no mutual concessions, and the Southern States had "no shadow of right" to what they demanded and only in part gave up. It was all-important that there should be a Union, but it had to result from the voluntary action of all the States; and each State had a perfect "right" to demand just whatever

it chose. The really wise and high-minded statesmen demanded for themselves nothing save justice; but they had to accomplish their purpose by yielding somewhat to the prejudices of their more foolish and less disinterested colleagues. It was better to limit the duration of the slave trade to twenty years than to allow it to be continued indefinitely, as would have been the case had the South Atlantic States remained by themselves. The three-fifths representation of the slaves was an evil anomaly, but it was no worse than allowing the small States equal representation in the Senate; indeed, balancing the two concessions against each other, it must be admitted that Virginia and North Carolina surrendered to New Hampshire and Rhode Island more than they got in return.

No man who supported slavery can ever have a clear and flawless title to our regard; and those who opposed it merit, in so far, the highest honor; but the opposition to it sometimes took forms that can be considered only as the vagaries of lunacy. The only hope of abolishing it lay, first in the establishment and then in the preservation of the Union; and if we had at the outset dissolved into a knot of struggling anarchies, it would have entailed an amount of evil both on our race and on all North America, compared to which the endurance of slavery for a century or two would have been as nothing. If we had even split up into only two republics, a Northern and a Southern, the West would probably have gone with the latter, and to this day slavery would have existed throughout the Mississippi valley; much of what is now our territory would have been held by European powers, scornfully heedless of our divided might, while in not a few States the form of government would have been a military dictatorship; and indeed

our whole history would have been as contemptible as was that of Germany for some centuries prior to the rise of the house of Hohenzollern.

The fierceness of the opposition to the adoption of the Constitution, and the narrowness of the majority by which Virginia and New York decided in its favor, while North Carolina and Rhode Island did not come in at all until absolutely forced, showed that the refusal to compromise on any one of the points at issue would have jeopardized everything. Had the slavery interest been in the least dissatisfied, or had the plan of government been a shade less democratic, or had the smaller States not been propitiated, the Constitution would have been rejected offhand; and the country would have had before it decades, perhaps centuries, of misrule, violence, and disorder.

Madison paid a very just compliment to some of Morris's best points when he wrote, anent his services in the convention: "To the brilliancy of his genius he added, what is too rare, a candid surrender of his opinions when the light of discussion satisfied him that they had been too hastily formed, and a readiness to aid in making the best of measures in which he had been overruled." Although so many of his own theories had been rejected, he was one of the warmest advocates of the Constitution; and it was he who finally drew up the document and put the finish to its style and arrangement, so that, as it now stands, it comes from his pen.

Hamilton, who more than any other man bore the brunt of the fight for its adoption, asked Morris to help him in writing the "Federalist," but the latter was for some reason unable to do so; and Hamilton was assisted only by Madison, and to a very slight extent by Jay. Pennsylvania, the State from which Morris had been

sent as a delegate, early declared in favor of the new experiment; although, as Morris wrote Washington, there had been cause to "dread the cold and sour temper of the back counties, and still more the wicked industry of those who have long habituated themselves to live on the public, and cannot bear the idea of being removed from the power and profit of state government, which has been and still is the means of supporting themselves, their families, and dependents, and (which perhaps is equally grateful) of depressing and humbling their political adversaries." In his own native State of New York the influences he thus describes were still more powerful, and it needed all Hamilton's wonderful genius to force a ratification of the Constitution in spite of the stupid selfishness of the Clintonian faction; as it was, he was only barely successful, although backed by all the best and ablest leaders in the community—Jay, Livingston, Schuyler, Stephen Van Rensselaer, Isaac Roosevelt, James Duane, and a host of others.

About this time Morris came back to New York to live, having purchased the family estate at Morrisania from his elder brother, Staats Long Morris, the British general. He had for some time been engaged in various successful commercial ventures with his friend, Robert Morris, including an East India voyage on a large scale, shipments of tobacco to France, and a share in ironworks on the Delaware River, and had become quite a rich man. As soon as the war was ended, he had done what he could do to have the loyalists pardoned and reinstated in their fortunes; thereby risking his popularity not a little, as the general feeling against the Tories was bitter and malevolent in the highest degree, in curious contrast to the good-will that so rapidly

sprang up between the Unionists and ex-Confederates after the Civil War.

He also kept an eye on foreign politics, and one of his letters to Jay curiously foreshadows the good-will generally felt by Americans of the present day toward Russia, running: "If her ladyship (the Czarina) would drive the Turk out of Europe, and demolish the Algerines and other piratical gentry, she will have done us much good for her own sake; . . . but it is hardly possible the other powers will permit Russia to possess so wide a door into the Mediterranean. I may be deceived, but I think England herself would oppose it. As an American, it is my hearty wish that she may effect her schemes."

Shortly after this it became necessary for him to sail for Europe on business.

CHAPTER VII

FIRST STAY IN FRANCE

After a hard winter passage of forty days' length Morris reached France, and arrived in Paris on February 3, 1789. He remained there a year on his private business; but his prominence in America, and his intimate friendship with many distinguished Frenchmen, at once admitted him to the highest social and political circles, where his brilliant talents secured him immediate importance.

The next nine years of his life were spent in Europe, and it was during this time that he unknowingly rendered his especial and peculiar service to the public. As an American statesman he has many rivals, and not a few superiors; but as a penetrating observer and recorder of contemporary events, he stands alone among the men of his time. He kept a full diary during his stay abroad, and was a most voluminous correspondent; and his capacity for keen, shrewd observation, his truthfulness, his wonderful insight into character, his sense of humor, and his power of graphic description, all combine to make his comments on the chief men and events of the day a unique record of the inside history of Western Europe during the tremendous convulsions of the French Revolution. He is always an entertaining and in all matters of fact a trustworthy writer. His letters and diary together form a real mine of wealth for the student either of the social life of the upper classes in France just before the outbreak, or of the events of the revolution itself.

In the first place, it must be premised that from the outset Morris was hostile to the spirit of the French Revolution, and his hostility grew in proportion to its excesses until at last it completely swallowed up his original antipathy to England, and made him regard France as normally our enemy, not our ally. This was perfectly natural, and indeed inevitable: in all really free countries, the best friends of freedom regarded the revolutionists, when they had fairly begun their bloody career, with horror and anger. It was only to oppressed, debased, and priest-ridden peoples that the French Revolution could come as the embodiment of liberty. Compared to the freedom already enjoyed by Americans, it was sheer tyranny of the most dreadful kind.

Morris saw clearly that the popular party in France, composed in part of amiable visionaries, theoretic philanthropists, and closet constitution-mongers, and in part of a brutal, sodden populace, maddened by the grinding wrongs of ages, knew not whither its own steps tended; and he also saw that the then existing generation of Frenchmen were not, and never would be, fitted to use liberty aright. It is small matter for wonder that he could not see as clearly the good which lay behind the movement; that he could not as readily foretell the real and great improvement it was finally to bring about, though only after a generation of hideous convulsions. Even as it was, he discerned what was happening, and what was about to happen, more distinctly than did any one else. The wild friends of the French Revolution, especially in America, supported it blindly, with but a very slight notion of what it really signified. Keen though Morris's intellectual vision was, it was impossible for him to see what future lay beyond the quarter of a century of impending tumult. It did not

lie within his powers to applaud the fiendish atrocities of the Red Terror for the sake of the problematical good that would come to the next generation. To do so he would have needed the granite heart of a zealot, as well as the prophetic vision of a seer.

The French Revolution was in its essence a struggle for the abolition of privilege, and for equality in civil rights. This Morris perceived, almost alone among the statesmen of his day; and he also perceived that most Frenchmen were willing to submit to any kind of government that would secure them the things for which they strove. As he wrote to Jefferson, when the republic was well under weigh: "The great mass of the French nation is less solicitous to preserve the present order of things than to prevent the return of the ancient oppression, and of course would more readily submit to a pure despotism than to that kind of monarchy whose only limits were found in those noble, legal, and clerical corps by which the people were alternately oppressed and insulted." To the downtrodden masses of Continental Europe, the gift of civil rights and the removal of the tyranny of the privileged classes, even though accompanied by the rule of a directory, a consul, or an emperor, represented an immense political advance; but to the free people of England, and to the freer people of America, the change would have been wholly for the worse.

Such being the case, Morris's attitude was natural and proper. There is no reason to question the sincerity of his statement in another letter, that "I do, from the bottom of my heart, wish well to this country [France]." Had the French people shown the least moderation or wisdom, he would have unhesitatingly sided with them against their oppressors. It must be

kept in mind that he was not influenced in the least in his course by the views of the upper classes with whom he mingled. On the contrary, when he first came to Europe, he distinctly lost popularity in some of the social circles in which he moved, because he was so much more conservative than his aristocratic friends, among whom the closet republicanism of the philosophers was for the moment all the rage. He had no love for the French nobility, whose folly and ferocity caused the revolution, and whose craven cowardice could not check it even before it had gathered headway. Long afterward he wrote of some of the *emigrés:* "The conversation of these gentlemen, who have the virtue and good fortune of their grandfathers to recommend them, leads me almost to forget the crimes of the French Revolution; and often the unforgiving temper and sanguinary wishes which they exhibit make me almost believe that the assertion of their enemies is true, namely, that it is success alone which has determined on whose side should be the crimes, and on whose the miseries." The truth of the last sentence was strikingly verified by the White Terror, even meaner, if less bloody, than the Red. Bourbon princes and Bourbon nobles were alike, and Morris only erred in not seeing that their destruction was the condition precedent upon all progress.

There was never another great struggle, in the end productive of good to mankind, where the tools and methods by which that end was won were so wholly vile as in the French Revolution. Alone among movements of the kind, it brought forth no leaders entitled to our respect; none who were both great and good; none even who were very great, save, at its beginning, strange, strong, crooked Mirabeau, and at its close the towering world-genius who sprang to power by its

means, wielded it for his own selfish purposes, and dazzled all nations over the wide earth by the glory of his strength and splendor.

We can hardly blame Morris for not appreciating a revolution whose immediate outcome was to be Napoleon's despotism, even though he failed to see all the good that would remotely spring therefrom. He considered, as he once wrote a friend, that "the true object of a great statesman is to give to any particular nation the kind of laws which is suitable to them, and the best constitution which they are capable of." There can be no sounder rule of statesmanship; and none was more flagrantly broken by the amiable but incompetent political doctrinaires of 1789. Thus the American, as a far-sighted statesman, despised the theorists who began the revolution, and, as a humane and honorable man, abhorred the black-hearted wretches who carried it on. His view of the people among whom he found himself, as well as his statement of his own position, he himself has recorded: "To fit people for a republic, as for any other form of government, a previous education is necessary. . . . In despotic governments the people, habituated to beholding everything bending beneath the weight of power, never possess that power for a moment without abusing it. Slaves, driven to despair, take arms, execute vast vengeance, and then sink back to their former condition of slaves. In such societies the patriot, the melancholy patriot, sides with the despot, because anything is better than a wild and bloody confusion."

So much for an outline of his views. His writings preserve them for us in detail on almost every important question that came up during his stay in Europe; couched, moreover, in telling, piquant sentences that

leave room for hardly a dull line in either letters or diary.

No sooner had he arrived in Paris than he sought out Jefferson, then the American minister, and Lafayette. They engaged him to dine on the two following nights. He presented his various letters of introduction, and in a very few weeks, by his wit, tact, and ability, had made himself completely at home in what was by far the most brilliant and attractive—although also the most hopelessly unsound—fashionable society of any European capital. He got on equally well with fine ladies, philosophers, and statesmen; was as much at his ease in the salons of the one as at the dinner-tables of the other; and all the time observed and noted down, with the same humorous zest, the social peculiarities of his new friends as well as the tremendous march of political events. Indeed, it is difficult to know whether to set the higher value on his penetrating observations concerning public affairs, or on his witty, light, half-satirical sketches of the men and women of the world with whom he was thrown in contact, told in his usual charming and effective style. No other American of note has left us writings half so humorous and amusing, filled, too, with information of the greatest value.

Although his relations with Jefferson were at this time very friendly, yet his ideas on most subjects were completely at variance with those of the latter. He visited him very often; and, after one of these occasions, jots down his opinion of his friend in his usual amusing vein: "Call on Mr. Jefferson, and sit a good while. General conversation on character and politics. I think he does not form very just estimates of character, but rather assigns too many to the humble rank of fools; whereas in life the gradations are infinite, and

each individual has his peculiarities of fort and feeble": not a bad protest against the dangers of sweeping generalization. Another time he records his judgment of Jefferson's ideas on public matters as follows: "He and I differ in our systems of politics. He, with all the leaders of liberty here, is desirous of annihilating distinctions of order. How far such views may be right respecting mankind in general is, I think, extremely problematical. But with respect to this nation I am sure they are wrong, and cannot eventuate well."

As soon as he began to go out in Parisian society, he was struck by the closet republicanism which it had become the fashion to affect. After his first visit to Lafayette, who received him with that warmth and frank, open-handed hospitality which he always extended to Americans, Morris writes: "Lafayette is full of politics; he appears to be too republican for the genius of his country." And again, when Lafayette showed him the draft of the celebrated Declaration of Rights, he notes: "I gave him my opinions, and suggested several amendments tending to soften the high-colored expressions of freedom. It is not by sounding words that revolutions are produced." Elsewhere he writes that "the young nobility have brought themselves to an active faith in the natural equality of mankind, and spurn at everything which looks like restraint." Some of their number, however, he considered to be actuated by considerations more tangible than mere sentiment. He chronicles a dinner with some members of the National Assembly, where "one, a noble representing the *Tiers*, is so vociferous against his own order, that I am convinced he means to rise by his eloquence, and finally will, I expect, vote with the opinion of the court, let that be what it may." The sentimental humanitarians

—who always form a most pernicious body, with an influence for bad hardly surpassed by that of the professionally criminal class—of course throve vigorously in an atmosphere where theories of mawkish benevolence went hand in hand with the habitual practice of vices too gross to name. Morris, in one of his letters, narrates an instance in point; at the same time showing how this excess of watery philanthropy was, like all the other movements of the French Revolution, but a violent and misguided reaction against former abuses of the opposite sort. The incident took place in Madame de Staël's salon. "The Count de Clermont Tonnerre, one of their best orators, read to us a very pathetic oration; and the object was to show that no penalties are the legal compensations for crimes or injuries: the man who is hanged, having by that event paid his debt to society, ought not to be held in dishonor; and in like manner he who has been condemned for seven years to be flogged in the galley should, when he has served out his apprenticeship, be received again into good company, as if nothing had happened. You smile; but observe the extreme to which the matter was carried the other way. Dishonoring thousands for the guilt of one has so shocked the public sentiment as to render this extreme fashionable. The oration was very fine, very sentimental, very pathetic, and the style harmonious. Shouts of applause and full approbation. When this was pretty well over, I told him that his speech was extremely eloquent, but that his principles were not very solid. Universal surprise!"

At times he became rather weary of the constant discussion of politics, which had become the chief drawing-room topic. Among the capacities of his lively and erratic nature was the power of being intensely bored

by anything dull or monotonous. He remarked testily that "republicanism was absolutely a moral influenza, from which neither titles, places, nor even the diadem can guard the possessor." In a letter to a friend on a different subject he writes: "Apropos,—a term which my Lord Chesterfield well observes we generally use to bring in what is not at all to the purpose,—apropos, then, I have here the strangest employment imaginable. A republican, and just as it were emerged from that assembly which has formed one of the most republican of all republican constitutions, I preach incessantly respect for the prince, attention to the rights of the nobles, and above all moderation, not only in the object, but also in the pursuit of it. All this you will say is none of my business; but I consider France as the natural ally of my country, and, of course, that we are interested in her prosperity; besides, to say the truth, I love France."

His hostility to the fashionable cult offended some of his best friends. The Lafayettes openly disapproved his sentiments. The marquis told him that he was injuring the cause, because his sentiments were being continually quoted against "the good party." Morris answered that he was opposed to democracy from a regard to liberty; that the popular party were going straight to destruction, and he would fain stop them if he could; for their views respecting the nation were totally inconsistent with the materials of which it was composed, and the worst thing that could happen to them would be to have their wishes granted. Lafayette half admitted that this was true. "He tells me that he is sensible his party are mad, and tells them so, but is not the less determined to die with them. I tell him that I think it would be quite as well to bring

them to their senses and live with them"—the last sentence showing the impatience with which the shrewd, fearless, practical American at times regarded the dreamy inefficiency of his French associates. Madame de Lafayette was even more hostile than her husband to Morris's ideas. In commenting on her beliefs he says: "She is a very sensible woman, but has formed her ideas of government in a manner not suited, I think, either to the situation, the circumstances, or the disposition of France."

He was considered too much of an aristocrat in the salon of the Comtesse de Tessé, the resort of "republicans of the first feather"; and at first was sometimes rather coldly received there. He felt, however, a most sincere friendship and regard for the comtesse, and thoroughly respected the earnestness with which she had for twenty years done what lay in her power to give her country greater liberty. She was a genuine enthusiast, and, when the National Assembly met, was filled with exultant hope for the future. The ferocious outbreaks of the mob, and the crazy lust for blood shown by the people at large, startled her out of her faith, and shocked her into the sad belief that her lifelong and painful labors had been wasted in the aid of a bad cause. Later in the year Morris writes: "I find Madame de Tessé is become a convert to my principles. We have a gay conversation of some minutes on their affairs, in which I mingle sound maxims of government with that piquant *légèreté* which this nation delights in. She insists that I dine with her at Versailles the next time I am there. We are vastly gracious, and all at once, in a serious tone, 'Mais attendez, madame, est-ce que je suis trop aristocrat?' To which she answers, with a smile of gentle humility, 'Oh, mon Dieu, non!' "

It is curious to notice how rapidly Morris's brilliant talents gave him a commanding position, stranger and guest though he was, among the most noted statesmen of France; how often he was consulted, and how widely his opinions were quoted. Moreover, his incisive truthfulness makes his writings more valuable to the historian of his time than are those of any of his contemporaries, French, English, or American. Taine, in his great work on the revolution, ranks him high among the small number of observers who have recorded clear and sound judgments of those years of confused, formless tumult and horror.

All his views on French politics are very striking. As soon as he reached Paris, he was impressed by the unrest and desire for change prevailing everywhere, and wrote home: "I find on this side of the Atlantic a resemblance to what I left on the other—a nation which exists in hopes, prospects, and expectations; the reverence for ancient establishments gone; existing forms shaken to the very foundation; and a new order of things about to take place, in which, perhaps, even the very names of all former institutions will be disregarded." And again, "This country presents an astonishing spectacle to one who has collected his ideas from books and information half a dozen years old. Everything is *à l'Anglaise*, and a desire to imitate the English prevails alike in the cut of a coat and the form of a constitution. Like the English, too, all are engaged in parliamenteering; and when we consider how novel this last business must be, I assure you the progress is far from contemptible"—a reference to Lafayette's electioneering trip to Auvergne. The rapidity with which, in America, order had come out of chaos, while in France the reverse process had been going on, impressed him

deeply; as he says: "If any new lesson were wanting to impress on our hearts a deep sense of the mutability of human affairs, the double contrast between France and America two years ago and at the present would surely furnish it."

He saw at once that the revolutionists had it in their power to do about as they chose. "If there be any real vigor in the nation the prevailing party in the States General may, if they please, overturn the monarchy itself, should the king commit his authority to a contest with them. The court is extremely feeble, and the manners are so extremely corrupt that they cannot succeed if there be any consistent opposition, unless the whole nation be equally depraved."

He did not believe that the people would be able to profit by the revolution, or to use their opportunities aright. For the numerous class of patriots who felt a vague, though fervent, enthusiasm for liberty in the abstract, and who, without the slightest practical knowledge, were yet intent on having all their own pet theories put into practice, he felt profound scorn and contempt; while he distrusted and despised the mass of Frenchmen, because of their frivolity and viciousness. He knew well that a pure theorist may often do as much damage to a country as the most corrupt traitor; and very properly considered that in politics the fool is quite as obnoxious as the knave. He also realized that levity and the inability to look life seriously in the face, or to attend to the things worth doing, may render a man just as incompetent to fulfil the duties of citizenship as would actual viciousness.

To the crazy theories of the constitution-makers and closet republicans generally, he often alludes in his diary, and in his letters home. In one place he notes:

"The literary people here, observing the abuses of the monarchical form, imagine that everything must go the better in proportion as it recedes from the present establishment, and in their closets they make men exactly suited to their systems; but unluckily they are such men as exist nowhere else, and least of all in France." And he writes almost the same thing to Washington: "The middle party, who mean well, have unfortunately acquired their ideas of government from books, and are admirable fellows upon paper: but as it happens, somewhat unfortunately, that the men who live in the world are very different from those who dwell in the heads of philosophers, it is not to be wondered at if the systems taken out of books are fit for nothing but to be put back into books again." And once more: "They have all that romantic spirit, and all those romantic ideas of government, which, happily for America, we were cured of before it was too late." He shows how they had never had the chance to gain wisdom through experience. "As they have hitherto felt severely the authority exercised in the name of their princes, every limitation of that power seems to them desirable. Never having felt the evils of too weak an executive, the disorders to be apprehended from anarchy make as yet no impression." Elsewhere he comments on their folly in trying to apply to their own necessities systems of government suited to totally different conditions; and mentions his own attitude in the matter: "I have steadily combated the violence and excess of those persons who, either inspired with an enthusiastic love of freedom, or prompted by sinister designs, are disposed to drive everything to extremity. Our American example has done them good; but, like all novelties, liberty runs away with their discretion, if they have any. They want an American con-

stitution with the exception of a king instead of a president, without reflecting that they have not American citizens to support that constitution. . . . Whoever desires to apply in the practical science of government those rules and forms which prevail and succeed in a foreign country, must fall into the same pedantry with our young scholars, just fresh from the university, who would fain bring everything to the Roman standard. . . . The scientific tailor who should cut after Grecian or Chinese models would not have many customers, either in London or Paris; and those who look to America for their political forms are not unlike the tailors in Laputa, who, as Gulliver tells us, always take measures with a quadrant."

He shows again and again his abiding distrust and fear of the French character, as it was at that time, volatile, debauched, ferocious, and incapable of self-restraint. To Lafayette he insisted that the "extreme licentiousness" of the people rendered it indispensable that they should be kept under authority; and on another occasion told him "that the nation was used to being governed, and would have to be governed; and that if he expected to lead them by their affections, he would himself be the dupe." In writing to Washington he painted the outlook in colors that, though black indeed, were not a shade too dark. "The materials for a revolution in this country are very indifferent. Everybody agrees that there is an utter prostration of morals; but this general proposition can never convey to an American mind the degree of depravity. It is not by any figure of rhetoric or force of language that the idea can be communicated. A hundred anecdotes and a hundred thousand examples are required to show the extreme rottenness of every member. There are men and

women who are greatly and eminently virtuous. I have the pleasure to number many in my own acquaintance; but they stand forward from a background deeply and darkly shaded. It is however from such crumbling matter that the great edifice of freedom is to be erected here. Perhaps like the stratum of rock which is spread under the whole surface of their country, it may harden when exposed to the air; but it seems quite as likely that it will fall and crush the builders. I own to you that I am not without such apprehensions, for there is one fatal principle which pervades all ranks. It is a perfect indifference to the violation of engagements. Inconstancy is so mingled in the blood, marrow, and very essence of this people, that when a man of high rank and importance laughs to-day at what he seriously asserted yesterday, it is considered as in the natural order of things. Consistency is a phenomenon. Judge, then, what would be the value of an association should such a thing be proposed and even adopted. The great mass of the common people have no religion but their priests, no law but their superiors, no morals but their interest. These are the creatures who, led by drunken curates, are now on the high road *à la liberté*."

Morris and Washington wrote very freely to each other. In one of his letters, the latter gave an account of how well affairs were going in America (save in Rhode Island, the majority of whose people "had long since bid adieu to every principle of honor, common sense, and honesty"), and then went on to discuss things in France. He expressed the opinion that, if the revolution went no farther than it had already gone, France would become the most powerful and happy state in Europe; but he trembled lest, having triumphed in the first paroxysms, it might succumb to others still more

violent that would be sure to follow. He feared equally the "licentiousness of the people" and the folly of the leaders, and doubted if they possessed the requisite temperance, firmness, and foresight; and if they did not, then he believed they would run from one extreme to another, and end with "a higher toned despotism than the one which existed before."

Morris answered him with his usual half-satiric humor, "Your sentiments on the revolution here I believe to be perfectly just, because they perfectly accord with my own, and that is, you know, the only standard which Heaven has given us by which to judge," and went on to describe how the parties in France stood. "The king is in effect a prisoner in Paris and obeys entirely the National Assembly. This Assembly may be divided into three parts: one, called the *aristocrats*, consists of the high clergy, the members of the law (note, these are not the lawyers) and such of the nobility as think they ought to form a separate order. Another, which has no name, but which consists of all sorts of people, really friends to a good free government. The third is composed of what is here called the *enragées*, that is, the madmen. These are the most numerous, and are of that class which in America is known by the name of pettifogging lawyers; together with . . . those persons who in all revolutions throng to the standard of change because they are not well. This last party is in close alliance with the populace here, and they have already unhinged everything, and, according to custom on such occasions, the torrent rushes on irresistibly until it shall have wasted itself." The *literati* he pronounced to have no understanding whatever of the matters at issue, and as was natural to a shrewd observer educated in the intensely practical school of American political

life, he felt utter contempt for the wordy futility and wild theories of the French legislators. "For the rest, they *discuss* nothing in their assembly. One large half of the time is spent in hallooing and bawling."

Washington and Morris were both so alarmed and indignant at the excesses committed by the revolutionists, and so frankly expressed their feelings, as to create an impression in some quarters that they were hostile to the revolution itself. The exact reverse was originally the case. They sympathized most warmly with the desire for freedom, and with the efforts made to attain it. Morris wrote to the President: "We have, I think, every reason to wish that the patriots may be successful. The generous wish that a free people must have to disseminate freedom, the grateful emotion which rejoices in the happiness of a benefactor, the interest we must feel as well in the liberty as in the power of this country, all conspire to make us far from indifferent spectators. I say that we have an *interest* in the liberty of France. The leaders here are our friends. Many of them have imbibed their principles in America, and all have been fired by our example. Their opponents are by no means rejoiced at the success of our revolution, and many of them are disposed to form connections of the strictest kind with Great Britain." Both Washington and Morris would have been delighted to see liberty established in France; but they had no patience with the pursuit of the bloody chimera which the revolutionists dignified with that title. The one hoped for, and the other counselled, moderation among the friends of republican freedom, not because they were opposed to it, but because they saw that it could only be gained and kept by self-restraint. They were, to say the least, perfectly excusable for believing that at that time some

form of monarchy, whether under king, dictator, or emperor, was necessary to France. Every one agrees that there are certain men wiser than their fellows; the only question is as to how these men can be best chosen out, and to this there can be no absolute answer. No mode will invariably give the best results; and the one that will come nearest to doing so under given conditions will not work at all under others. Where the people are enlightened and moral they are themselves the ones to choose their rulers; and such a form of government is unquestionably the highest of any, and the only one that a high-spirited and really free nation will tolerate; but if they are corrupt and degraded, they are unfit for republicanism, and need to be under an entirely different system. The most genuine republican, if he has any common sense, does not believe in a democratic government for every race and in every age.

Morris was a true republican, and an American to the core. He was alike free from truckling subserviency to European opinion—a degrading remnant of colonialism that unfortunately still lingers in certain limited social and literary circles—and from the uneasy self-assertion that springs partly from sensitive vanity, and partly from a smothered doubt as to one's real position. Like most men of strong character, he had no taste for the "cosmopolitanism" that so generally indicates a weak moral and mental make-up. He enjoyed his stay in Europe to the utmost, and was intimate with the most influential men and charming women of the time; but he was heartily glad to get back to America, refused to leave it again, and always insisted that it was the most pleasant of all places in which to live. While abroad he was simply a gentleman among gentlemen. He never intruded his political views or national prej-

udices upon his European friends; but he was not inclined to suffer any imputation on his country. Any question about America that was put in good faith, no matter how much ignorance it displayed, he always answered good-humoredly; and he gives in his diary some amusing examples of such conversations. Once he was cross-examined by an inquisitive French nobleman, still in the stage of civilization which believes that no man can be paid to render a service to another, especially a small service, and yet retain his self-respect and continue to regard himself as the full political equal of his employer. One of this gentleman's sagacious inquiries was as to how a shoemaker could, in the pride of his freedom, think himself equal to a king, and yet accept an order to make shoes; to which Morris replied that he would accept it as a matter of business, and be glad of the chance to make them, since it lay in the line of his duty; and that he would all the time consider himself at full liberty to criticise his visitor, or the king, or any one else, who lapsed from *his* own duty. After recording several queries of the same nature, and some rather abrupt answers, the diary for that day closes rather caustically with the comment: "This manner of thinking and speaking, however, is too masculine for the climate I am now in."

In a letter to Washington, Morris made one of his usual happy guesses—if forecasting the future by the aid of marvellous insight into human character can properly be called a guess—as to what would happen to France. "It is very difficult to guess whereabouts the flock will settle when it flies so wild; but as far as it is possible to guess this (late) kingdom will be cast into a congeries of little democracies, laid out, not according to rivers, mountains, etc., but with the square

and compass according to latitude, longitude," and adds that he thinks so much fermenting matter will soon give the nation "a kind of political colic."

He rendered some services to Washington that did not come in the line of his public duty. One of these was to get him a watch, Washington having written to have one purchased in Paris, of gold, "not a small, trifling, nor a finical ornamental one, but a watch well executed in point of workmanship, large and flat, with a plain, handsome key." Morris sent it to him by Jefferson, "with two copper keys and one golden one, and a box containing a spare spring and glasses." His next service to the great Virginian, or rather to his family, was of a different kind, and he records it with a smile at his own expense. "Go to M. Houdon's; he has been waiting for me a long time. I stand for his statue of General Washington, being the humble employment of a manikin. This is literally taking the advice of St. Paul, to be all things to all men."

He corresponded with many men of note; not the least among whom was the daring corsair, Paul Jones. The latter was very anxious to continue in the service of the people with whom he had cast in his lot, and in command of whose vessels he had reached fame. Morris was obliged to tell him that he did not believe an American navy would be created for some years to come, and advised him meanwhile to go into the service of the Russians, as he expected there would soon be warm work on the Baltic; and even gave him a hint as to what would probably be the best plan of campaign. Paul Jones wanted to come to Paris; but from this Morris dissuaded him. "A journey to this city can, I think, produce nothing but the expense attending it; for neither pleasure nor profit can be expected here, by

one of your profession in particular; and, except that it is a more dangerous residence than many others, I know of nothing which may serve to you as an inducement."

CHAPTER VIII

LIFE IN PARIS

Although Morris entered into the social life of Paris with all the zest natural to his pleasure-loving character, yet he was far too clear-headed to permit it to cast any glamour over him. Indeed, it is rather remarkable that a young provincial gentleman, from a raw, new, far-off country, should not have had his head turned by being made somewhat of a lion in what was then the foremost city of the civilized world. Instead of this happening, his notes show that he took a perfectly cool view of his new surroundings, and appreciated the over-civilized, aristocratic society, in which he found himself, quite at its true worth. He enjoyed the life of the salon very much, but it did not in the least awe or impress him; and he was of too virile fibre, too essentially a man, to be long contented with it alone. He likewise appreciated the fashionable men, and especially the fashionable women, whom he met there; but his amusing comments on them, as shrewd as they are humorous, prove how little he respected their philosophy, and how completely indifferent he was to their claims to social pre-eminence.

Much has been written about the pleasure-loving, highly cultured society of eighteenth-century France; but to a man like Morris, of real ability and with an element of sturdiness in his make-up, both the culture and knowledge looked a little like veneering; the polish partook of effeminacy; the pleasure so eagerly sought after could be called pleasure only by people of ignoble

ambition; and the life that was lived seemed narrow and petty, agreeable enough for a change, but dreary beyond measure if followed too long. The authors, philosophers, and statesmen of the salon were rarely, almost never, men of real greatness; their metal did not ring true; they were shams, and the life of which they were a part was a sham. Not only was the existence hollow, unwholesome, effeminate, but also in the end tedious: the silent, decorous dulness of life in the dreariest country town is not more insufferable than, after a time, become the endless chatter, the small witticisms, the mock enthusiasms, and vapid affectations of an aristocratic society as artificial and unsound as that of the Parisian drawing-rooms in the last century.

But all this was delightful for a time, especially to a man who had never seen any city larger than the overgrown villages of New York and Philadelphia. Morris thus sums up his first impressions in a letter to a friend: "A man in Paris lives in a sort of whirlwind, which turns him round so fast that he can see nothing. And as all men and things are in the same vertiginous condition, you can neither fix yourself nor your object for regular examination. Hence the people of this metropolis are under the necessity of pronouncing their definitive judgment from the first glance; and being thus habituated to shoot flying, they have what sportsmen call a quick sight. *Ex pede Herculem.* They know a wit by his snuff-box, a man of taste by his bow, and a statesman by the cut of his coat. It is true that, like other sportsmen, they sometimes miss; but then, like other sportsmen too, they have a thousand excuses besides the want of skill: the fault, you know, may be in the dog, or the bird, or the powder, or the flint, or even the gun, without mentioning the gunner."

Among the most famous of the salons where he was fairly constant in his attendance was that of Madame de Staël. There was not a little contempt mixed with his regard for the renowned daughter of Necker. She amused him, however, and he thought well of her capacity, though in his diary he says that he never in his life saw "such exuberant vanity" as she displayed about her father, Necker—a very ordinary personage, whom the convulsions of the time had for a moment thrown forward as the most prominent man in France. By way of instance he mentions a couple of her remarks, one to the effect that a speech of Talleyrand on the church property was "excellent, admirable, in short that there were two pages in it which were worthy of M. Necker"; and another wherein she said that wisdom was a very rare quality, and that she knew of no one who possessed it in a superlative degree except her father.

The first time he met her was after an exciting discussion in the Assembly over the finances, which he describes at some length. Necker had introduced an absurd scheme for a loan. Mirabeau, who hated Necker, saw the futility of his plan, but was also aware that popular opinion was blindly in his favor, and that to oppose him would be ruinous; so in a speech of "fine irony" he advocated passing Necker's proposed bill without change or discussion, avowing that his object was to have the responsibility and glory thrown entirely on the proposer of the measure. He thus yielded to the popular view, while at the same time he shouldered on Necker all the responsibility for a deed which it was evident would in the end ruin him. It was a not very patriotic move, although a good example of selfish political tactics, and Morris sneered bitterly at its adoption by the representatives of a people who prided them-

selves on being "the modern Athenians." To his surprise, however, even Madame de Staël took Mirabeau's action seriously; she went into raptures over the wisdom of the Assembly in doing just what Necker said, for "the only thing they could do was to comply with her father's wish, and there could be no doubt as to the success of her father's plans! Bravo!"

With Morris she soon passed from politics to other subjects. "Presented to Madame de Staël as *un homme d'esprit*," he writes, "she singles me out and makes *a talk;* asks if I have not written a book on the American Constitution. 'Non madame, j'ai fait mon devoir en assistant à la formation de cette constitution.' 'Mais, monsieur, votre conversation doit être très intéressante, car je vous entends cité de toute parti.' 'Ah, madame, je ne suis pas digne de cette éloge.' How I lost my leg? It was unfortunately not in the military service of my country. 'Monsieur, vous avez l'air très imposant,' and this is accompanied with that look which, without being what Sir John Falstaff calls the 'leer of invitation,' amounts to the same thing. . . . This leads us on, but in the midst of the chat arrive letters, one of which is from her lover, Narbonne, now with his regiment. It brings her to a little recollection, which a little time will, I think, again banish, and a few interviews would stimulate her to try the experiment of her fascinations even on the native of a new world who has left one of his legs behind him."

An entry in Morris's diary previous to this conversation shows that he had no very high opinion of this same Monsieur de Narbonne: "He considers a civil war inevitable, and is about to join his regiment, being, as he says, in a conflict between the dictates of his duty and his conscience. I tell him that I know of no duty

but that which conscience dictates. I presume that his conscience will dictate to join the strongest side."

Morris's surmises as to his fair friend's happy forgetfulness of her absent lover proved true: she soon became bent on a flirtation with the good-looking American stranger, and when he failed to make any advances she promptly made them herself; told him that she "rather invited than repelled those who were inclined to be attentive," and capped this exhibition of modest feminine reserve by suggesting that "perhaps he might become an admirer." Morris dryly responded that it was not impossible, but that, as a previous condition, she must agree not to repel him—which she instantly promised. Afterward, at dinner, "we become engaged in an animated conversation, and she desires me to speak English, which her husband does not understand. In looking round the room, I observe in him very much emotion, and I tell her that he loves her distractedly, which she says she knows, and that it renders her miserable. . . . I condole with her a little on her widowhood, the Chevalier de Narbonne being absent in Franche Comté. . . . She asks me if I continue to think she has a preference for Monsieur de Tonnerre. I reply only by observing that each of them has wit enough for one couple, and therefore I think they had better separate, and take each a partner who is *un peu bête*. After dinner I seek a conversation with the husband, which relieves him. He inveighs bitterly [poor, honest Swede] against the manners of the country, and the cruelty of alienating a wife's affection. I regret with him on general grounds that prostitution of morals which unfits them for good government, and convince him, I think, I shall not contribute to making him any more uncomfortable than he already is." Certainly,

according to Morris's evidence, Madame de Staël's sensitive delicacy could only be truthfully portrayed by the unfettered pen of a Smollett.

He was an especial *habitué* of the salon of Madame de Flahaut, the friend of Talleyrand and Montesquieu. She was a perfectly characteristic type; a clever, accomplished little woman, fond of writing romances, and a thorough-paced *intriguante*. She had innumerable enthusiasms, with perhaps a certain amount of sincerity in each, and was a more infatuated political schemer than any of her male friends. She was thoroughly conversant with the politics of both court and Assembly; her "precision and justness of thought was very uncommon in either sex," and, as time went on, made her a willing and useful helper in some of Morris's plans. Withal she was a mercenary, self-seeking little personage, bent on increasing her own fortune by the aid of her political friends. Once, when dining with Morris and Talleyrand, she told them in perfect good faith that, if the latter was made minister, "they must be sure to make a million for her."

She was much flattered by the deference that Morris showed for her judgment, and in return let him into not a few state secrets. She and he together drew up a translation of the outline for a constitution for France, which he had prepared, and through her it was forwarded to the king. Together with her two other intimates, Talleyrand and Montesquieu, they made just a party of four, often dining at her house; and when her husband was sent to Spain, the dinners became more numerous than ever, sometimes merely *parties carrées*, sometimes very large entertainments. Morris records that, small or large, they were invariably "excellent dinners, where the conversation was always extremely gay."

Once they planned out a ministry together, and it must be kept in mind that it was quite on the cards that their plan would be adopted. After disposing suitably of all the notabilities, some in stations at home, others in stations abroad, the scheming little lady turned to Morris: "'Enfin,' she says, 'mon ami, vous et moi nous gouvernerons la France.' It is an odd combination, but the kingdom is actually in much worse hands."

This conversation occurred one morning when he had called to find madame at her toilet, with her dentist in attendance. It was a coarse age, for all the gilding; and the coarseness was ingrained in the fibre even of the most ultrasentimental. At first Morris felt perhaps a little surprised at the easy familiarity with which the various ladies whose friend he was admitted him to the privacy of boudoir and bedroom, and chronicles with some amusement the graceful indifference with which one of them would say to him: "Monsieur Morris me permettra de faire ma toilette?" But he was far from being a strait-laced man—in fact, he was altogether too much the reverse—and he soon grew habituated to these as well as to much worse customs. However, he notes that the different operations of the toilet "were carried on with an entire and astounding regard to modesty."

Madame de Flahaut was a very charming member of the class who, neither toiling nor spinning, were supported in luxury by those who did both, and who died from want while so doing. At this very time, while France was rapidly drifting into bankruptcy, the fraudulent pensions given to a horde of courtiers, titled placemen, well-born harlots and their offspring, reached the astounding total of two hundred and seventy odd millions of livres. The Assembly passed a decree cutting

away these pensions right and left, and thereby worked sad havoc in the gay society that nothing could render serious but immediate and pressing poverty—not even the loom of the terror ahead, growing darker moment by moment. Calling on his fascinating little friend immediately after the decree was published, Morris finds her "*au désespoir*, and she intends to cry very loud, she says. . . . She has been in tears all day. Her pensions from Monsieur and the Comte d'Artois are stopped. On that from the king she receives but three thousand francs—and must therefore quit Paris. I try to console her, but it is impossible. Indeed, the stroke is severe; for, with youth, beauty, wit, and every loveliness, she must quit all she loves, and pass her life with what she abhors." In the time of adversity Morris stood loyally by the friends who had treated him so kindly when the world was a merry one and things went well with them. He helped them in every way possible; his time and his purse were always at their service; and he performed the difficult feat of giving pecuniary assistance with a tact and considerate delicacy that prevented the most sensitive from taking offense.

He early became acquainted with the Duchess of Orleans, wife of Philippe Egalité, the vicious voluptuary of liberal leanings and clouded character. He met her at the house of an old friend, Madame de Chastellux. At first he did not fancy her, and rather held himself aloof, being uncertain "how he would get on with royalty." The duchess, however, was attracted by him, asked after him repeatedly, made their mutual friends throw them together, and finally so managed that he became one of her constant visitors and attendants. This naturally flattered him, and he remained sincerely loyal to her always afterward. She was particularly

anxious that he should be interested in her son, then a boy, afterward destined to become the citizen king—not a bad man, but a mean one, and rather an unkingly king even for the nineteenth century, fertile though it has been in ignoble royalty. Morris's further dealings with this precious youth will have to be considered hereafter.

After his first interview he notes that the duchess was "handsome enough to punish the duke for his irregularities." He also mentioned that she still seemed in love with her husband. However, the lady was not averse to seeking a little sentimental consolation from her new friend, to whom she confided, in their after intimacy, that she was weary at heart and not happy, and—a thoroughly French touch—that she had the "besoin d'être aimée." On the day they first met, while he is talking to her, "the widow of the late Duke of Orleans comes in, and at going away, according to custom, kisses the duchess. I observe that the ladies of Paris are very fond of each other; which gives rise to some observations from her royal highness on the person who has just quitted the room, which show that the kiss does not always betoken great affection. In going away she is pleased to say that she is glad to have met me, and I believe her. The reason is that I dropped some expressions and sentiments a little rough, which were agreeable because they contrasted with the palling polish she meets with everywhere. Hence I conclude that the less I have the honor of such good company the better; for when the novelty ceases all is over, and I shall probably be worse than insipid."

Nevertheless, the "good company" was determined he should make one of their number. He was not very loath himself, when he found he was in no danger of

being patronized—for anything like patronage was always particularly galling to his pride, which was of the kind that resents a tone of condescension more fiercely than an overt insult—and he became a fast friend of the house of Orleans. The duchess made him her confidant; unfolded to him her woes about the duke; and once, when he was dining with her, complained to him bitterly of the duke's conduct in not paying her allowance regularly. She was in financial straits at the time; for, though she was allowed four hundred and fifty thousand livres a year, yet three hundred and fifty thousand were appropriated for the house-servants, table, etc.—an item wherein her American friend, albeit not overfrugal, thought a very little economy would result in a great saving.

His description of one of the days he spent at Raincy with the duchess and her friends gives us not only a glimpse of the life of the great ladies and fine gentlemen of the day, but also a clear insight into the reasons why these same highly polished ladies and gentlemen had utterly lost their hold over the people whose God-given rulers they deemed themselves to be.

Déjeuner à la fourchette was not served till noon—Morris congratulating himself that he had taken a light breakfast earlier. "After breakfast we go to mass in the chapel. In the tribune above we have a bishop, an abbé, the duchess, her maids and some of their friends. Madame de Chastellux is below on her knees. We are amused above by a number of little tricks played off by Monsieur de Ségur and Monsieur de Cabières with a candle, which is put into the pockets of different gentlemen, the bishop among the rest, and lighted, while they are otherwise engaged (for there is a fire in the tribune), to the great merriment of the spectators. Im-

moderate laughter is the consequence. The duchess preserves as much gravity as she can. This scene must be very edifying to the domestics who are opposite to us, and the villagers who worship below." The afternoon's amusements were not to his taste. They all walked, which he found very hot; then they got into bateaux, and the gentlemen rowed the ladies, which was still hotter; and then there came more walking, so he was glad to get back to the château. The formal dinner was served after five; the conversation thereat varied between the vicious and the frivolous. There was much bantering, well-bred in manner and excessively underbred in matter, between the different guests of both sexes, about the dubious episodes in their past careers, and the numerous shady spots in their respective characters. Epigrams and "epitaphs" were bandied about freely, some in verse, some not; probably very amusing then, but their lustre sadly tarnished in the eyes of those who read them now. While they were dining, "a number of persons surround the windows, doubtless from a high idea of the company, to whom they are obliged to look up at an awful distance. Oh, did they but know how trivial the conversation, how very trivial the characters, their respect would soon be changed to an emotion entirely different!"

This was but a month before the Bastille fell; and yet, on the threshold of their hideous doom, the people who had most at stake were incapable not only of intelligent action to ward off their fate, but even of serious thought as to what their fate would be. The men —the nobles, the clerical dignitaries, and the princes of the blood—chose the church as a place wherein to cut antics that would have better befitted a pack of monkeys; while the women, their wives and mistresses, ex-

changed with them impure jests at their own expense, relished because of the truth on which they rested. Brutes might still have held sway at least for a time; but these were merely vicious triflers. They did not believe in their religion; they did not believe in themselves; they did not believe in anything. They had no earnestness, no seriousness; their sensibilities and enthusiasms were alike affectations. There was still plenty of fire and purpose and furious energy in the hearts of the French people; but these and all the other virile virtues lay not among the noblesse, but among the ranks of the common herd beneath them, downtrodden, bloody in their wayward ferocity, but still capable of fierce, heroic devotion to an ideal in which they believed, and for which they would spill the blood of others, or pour out their own, with the proud waste of utter recklessness.

Many of Morris's accounts of the literary life of the salon read as if they were explanatory notes to "Les Précieuses Ridicules." There was a certain pretentiousness about it that made it a bit of a sham at the best; and the feebler variety of salon, built on such a foundation, thus became that most despicable of things, an imitation of a pretense. At one of the dinners which Morris describes, the company was of a kind that would have done no discredit to an entertainment of the great social and literary light of Eatanswill. "Set off in great haste to dine with the Comtesse de R., on an invitation of a week's standing. Arrive at about a quarter past three, and find in the drawing-room some dirty linen and no fire. While a waiting-woman takes away one, a valet lights up the other. Three small sticks in a deep bed of ashes give no great expectation of heat. By the smoke, however, all doubts are removed respecting the

existence of fire. To expel the smoke, a window is opened, and, the day being cold, I have the benefit of as fresh air as can reasonably be expected in so large a city.

"Toward four o'clock the guests begin to assemble, and I begin to expect that, as madame is a poetess, I shall have the honor to dine with that exalted part of the species who devote themselves to the muses. In effect, the gentlemen begin to compliment their respective works; and, as regular hours cannot be expected in a house where the mistress is occupied more with the intellectual than the material world, I have a delightful prospect of a continuance of the scene. Toward five, madame steps in to announce dinner, and the hungry poets advance to the charge. As they bring good appetites, they have certainly reason to praise the feast. And I console myself with the persuasion that for this day at least I shall escape an indigestion. A very narrow escape, too, for some rancid butter, of which the cook had been liberal, puts me in bodily fear. If the repast is not abundant, we have at least the consolation that there is no lack of conversation. Not being perfectly master of the language, most of the jests escaped me. As for the rest of the company, each being employed either in saying a good thing, or else in studying one to say, it is no wonder if he cannot find time to applaud that of his neighbors. They all agree that we live in an age alike deficient in justice and in taste. Each finds in the fate of his own works numerous instances to justify this censure. They tell me, to my great surprise, that the public now condemn theatrical compositions before they have heard the first recital. And, to remove my doubts, the comtesse is so kind as to assure me that this rash decision has been made on one of her

own pieces. In pitying modern degeneracy, we rise from the table.

"I take my leave immediately after the coffee, which by no means dishonors the precedent repast; and madame informs me that on Tuesdays and Thursdays she is always at home, and will always be glad to see me. While I stammer out some return to the compliment, my heart, convinced of my unworthiness to partake of such attic entertainments, makes me promise never again to occupy the place from which perhaps I had excluded a worthier personage."

Among Morris's other qualities, he was the first to develop that peculiarly American vein of humor which is especially fond of gravely pretending to believe without reserve some preposterously untrue assertion—as throughout the above quotation.

Though the society in which he was thrown interested him, he always regarded it with half-sarcastic amusement, and at times it bored him greatly. Meditating on the conversation in "this upper region of wits and graces," he concludes that "the sententious style" is the one best fitted for it, and that in it "observations with more of justice than splendor cannot amuse," and sums up by saying that "he could not please, because he was not sufficiently pleased."

His comments upon the various distinguished men he met are always interesting, on account of the quick, accurate judgment of character which they show. It was this insight into the feelings and ideas alike of the leaders and of their followers which made his political predictions often so accurate. His judgment of many of his contemporaries comes marvellously near the cooler estimate of history.

He was originally prejudiced in favor of the king,

poor Louis XVI, and, believing him "to be an honest and good man, he sincerely wished him well," but he very soon began to despise him for his weakness. This quality was the exact one that under existing circumstances was absolutely fatal; and Morris mentions it again and again, pronouncing the king "a well-meaning man, but extremely weak, without genius or education to show the way toward that good which he desires," and "a prince so weak that he can influence very little either by his presence or absence." Finally, in a letter to Washington, he gives a biting sketch of the unfortunate monarch. "If the reigning prince were not the small-beer character that he is, there can be but little doubt that, watching events and making a tolerable use of them, he would regain his authority; but what will you have from a creature who, situated as he is, eats and drinks, sleeps well and laughs, and is as merry a grig as lives? The idea that they will give him some money, which he can economize, and that he will have no trouble in governing, contents him entirely. Poor man! He little thinks how unstable is his situation. He is beloved, but it is not with the sort of love which a monarch should inspire. It is that kind of good-natured pity which one feels for a led captive. There is besides no possibility of serving him, for at the slightest show of opposition he gives up everything and every person." Morris had too robust a mind to feel the least regard for mere amiability and good intentions when unaccompanied by any of the ruder, manlier virtues.

The Count d'Artois had "neither sense to counsel himself, nor to choose counsellors for himself, much less to counsel others." This gentleman, afterward Charles X, stands as perhaps the most shining example of the monumental ineptitude of his royal house. His fellow

Bourbon, the amiable Bomba of Naples, is his only equal for dull silliness, crass immorality, and the lack of every manly or kingly virtue. Democracy has much to answer for, but after all it would be hard to find, even among the aldermen of New York and Chicago, men whose moral and mental shortcomings would put them lower than this royal couple. To our shame be it said, our system of popular government once let our greatest city fall under the control of Tweed; but it would be rank injustice to that clever rogue to compare him with the two vicious dullards whom the opposite system permitted to tyrannize at Paris and Naples. Moreover, in the end, we of the democracy not only overthrew the evil-doer who oppressed us, but also put him in prison; and in the long run we have usually meted out the same justice to our lesser criminals. Government by manhood suffrage shows at its worst in large cities; and yet even in these experience certainly does not show that a despotism works a whit better, or as well.

Morris described the Count de Montmorin pithily, saying: "He has more understanding than people in general imagine, and he means well, very well, but he means it feebly."

When Morris came to France, Necker was the most prominent man in the kingdom. He was a hard-working, well-meaning, conceited person, not in the least fitted for public affairs, a banker but not a financier, and affords a beautiful illustration of the utter futility of the popular belief that a good business man will necessarily be a good statesman. Accident had made him the most conspicuous figure of the government, admired and hated, but not looked down upon; yet Morris saw through him at a glance. After their first meeting, he writes down in his diary: "He has the look and manner

of the counting-house, and, being dressed in embroidered velvet, he contrasts strongly with his habiliments. His bow, his address, say, 'I am the man.' . . . If he is really a very great man, I am deceived; and yet this is a rash judgment. If he is not a laborious man, I am also deceived." He soon saw that both the blame and the praise bestowed on him were out of all proportion to his consequence, and he wrote: "In their anguish [the nobles] curse Necker, who is in fact less the cause than the instrument of their sufferings. His popularity depends now more on the opposition he meets with from one party than any serious regard of the other. It is the attempt to throw him down which saves him from falling; . . . as it is, he must soon fall." To Washington he gave a fuller analysis of his character. "As to M. Necker, he is one of those people who has obtained a much greater reputation than he has any right to. . . . In his public administration he has always been honest and disinterested; which proves well, I think, for his former private conduct, or else it proves that he has more vanity than cupidity. Be that as it may, an unspotted integrity as minister, and serving at his own expense in an office which others seek for the purpose of enriching themselves, have acquired for him very deservedly much confidence. Add to this that his writings on finance teem with that sort of sensibility which makes the fortune of modern romances, and which is exactly suited to this lively nation, who love to read but hate to think. Hence his reputation. He . . . [has not] the talents of a great minister. His education as a banker has taught him to make tight bargains, and put him upon his guard against projects. But though he understands man as a covetous creature, he does not understand mankind—a defect which is

remediless. He is utterly ignorant of politics, by which I mean politics in the great sense, or that sublime science which embraces for its object the happiness of mankind. Consequently he neither knows what constitution to form, nor how to obtain the consent of others to such as he wishes. From the moment of convening the States General, he has been afloat upon the wide ocean of incidents. But what is most extraordinary is that M. Necker is a very poor financier. This I know will sound like heresy in the ears of most people, but it is true. The plans he has proposed are feeble and inept."

A far more famous man, Talleyrand, then Bishop of Autun, he also gauged correctly from the start, writing down that he appeared to be "a sly, cool, cunning, ambitious, and malicious man. I know not why conclusions so disadvantageous to him are formed in my mind, but so it is, and I cannot help it." He was afterward obliged to work much in common with Talleyrand, for both took substantially the same view of public affairs in that crisis, and were working for a common end. Speaking of his new ally's plan respecting church property, he says: "He is bigoted to it, and the thing is well enough; but the mode is not so well. He is attached to this *as an author*, which is not a good sign for a man of business." And again he criticises Talleyrand's management of certain schemes for the finances, as showing a willingness "to sacrifice great objects for the sake of small ones . . . an inverse ratio of moral proportion."

Morris was fond of Lafayette, and appreciated highly his courage and keen sense of honor; but he did not think much of his ability, and became at times very impatient with his vanity and his impractical theories. Besides, he deemed him a man who was carried away by the current, and could neither stem nor guide it.

"I have known my friend Lafayette now for many years, and can estimate at the just value both his words and actions. He means ill to no one, but he is very much below the business he has undertaken; and if the sea runs high, he will be unable to hold the helm." And again, in writing to Washington: "Unluckily he has given in to measures . . . which he does not heartily approve, and he heartily approves many things which experience will demonstrate to be dangerous."

The misshapen but mighty genius of Mirabeau he found more difficulty in estimating; he probably never rated it quite high enough. He naturally scorned a man of such degraded debauchery, who, having been one of the great inciters to revolution, had now become a subsidized ally of the court. He considered him "one of the most unprincipled scoundrels that ever lived," although of "superior talents," and "so profligate that he would disgrace any administration," besides having so little principle as to make it unsafe to trust him. After his death he thus sums him up: "Vices both degrading and detestable marked this extraordinary being. Completely prostitute, he sacrificed everything to the whim of the moment;—*cupidus alieni prodigus sui;* venal, shameless; and yet greatly virtuous when pushed by a prevailing impulse, but never truly virtuous, because never under the steady control of reason, nor the firm authority of principle. I have seen this man, in the short space of two years, hissed, honored, hated, mourned. Enthusiasm has just now presented him gigantic. Time and reflection will sink this stature." Even granting this to be wholly true, as it undoubtedly is in the main, it was nevertheless the fact that in Mirabeau alone lay the last hope of salvation for the French nation; and Morris erred in strenuously

opposing Lafayette's going into a ministry with him. Indeed, he seems in this case to have been blinded by prejudice, and certainly acted very inconsistently; for his advice and the reasons he gave for it were completely at variance with the rules he himself laid down to Lafayette, with even more cynicism than common sense, when the latter once made some objections to certain proposed coadjutors of his: "I state to him . . . that, as to the objections he has made on the score of morals in some, he must consider that men do not go into an administration as the direct road to heaven; that they are prompted by ambition or avarice, and therefore that the only way to secure the most virtuous is by making it their interest to act rightly."

Morris thus despised the king, and distrusted the chief political leaders; and, as he wrote Washington, he was soon convinced that there was an immense amount of corruption in the upper circles. The people at large he disliked even more than he did their advisers, and he had good grounds, too, as the following extract from his journal shows: "July 22. After dinner, walk a little under the arcade of the Palais Royal, waiting for my carriage. In this period the head and body of M. de Toulon are introduced in triumph, the head on a pike, the body dragged naked on the earth. Afterward this horrible exhibition is carried through the different streets. His crime is, to have accepted a place in the ministry. This mutilated form of an old man of seventy-five is shown to his son-in-law, Berthier, the intendant of Paris; and afterward he also is put to death and cut to pieces, the populace carrying about the mangled fragments with a savage joy. Gracious God, what a people!"

He describes at length, and most interestingly, the

famous opening of the States General, "the beginning of the revolution." He eyed this body even at the beginning with great distrust; and he never thought that any of the delegates showed especial capacity for grappling with the terrible dangers and difficulties by which they were encompassed. He comments on the extreme enthusiasm with which the king was greeted, and sympathizes strongly with Marie Antoinette, who was treated with studied and insulting coldness. "She was exceedingly hurt. I cannot help feeling the mortification which the poor queen meets with, for I see only the woman; and it seems unmanly to treat a woman with unkindness. . . . Not one voice is heard to wish her well. I would certainly raise mine if I were a Frenchman; but I have no right to express a sentiment, and in vain solicit those who are near me to do it." . . . At last "the queen rises, and, to my great satisfaction, she hears, for the first time in several months, the sound of '*Vive la reine!*' She makes a low courtesy, and this produces a louder acclamation, and that a lower courtesy."

The sympathy was for the woman, not the queen, the narrow-minded, absolute sovereign, the intriguer against popular government, whose policy was as heavily fraught with bale for the nation as was that of Robespierre himself. The king was more than competent to act as his own evil genius; had he not been, Marie Antoinette would have amply filled the place.

He characterized the carrying of "that diabolical castle," the Bastille, as "among the most extraordinary things I have met with." The day it took place he wrote in his journal, with an irony very modern in its flavor: "Yesterday it was the fashion at Versailles not to believe that there were any disturbances at Paris.

I presume that this day's transactions will induce a conviction that all is not perfectly quiet."

He used the Bastille as a text when, shortly afterward, he read a brief lesson to a certain eminent painter. The latter belonged to that class of artists with pen or pencil (only too plentiful in America at the present day) who always insist on devoting their energies to depicting subjects worn threadbare by thousands of predecessors, instead of working in the new, broad fields, filled with picturesque material, opened to them by their own country and its history. "The painter shows us a piece he is now about for the king, taken from the Æneid: Venus restraining the arm which is raised in the temple of the Vestals to shed the blood of Helen. I tell him he had better paint the storm of the Bastille."

CHAPTER IX

MISSION TO ENGLAND: RETURN TO PARIS

In March, 1790, Morris went to London, in obedience to a letter received from Washington appointing him private agent to the British Government, and enclosing him the proper credentials.

Certain of the conditions of the treaty of peace between Great Britain and the United States, although entered into seven years before, were still unfulfilled. It had been stipulated that the British should give up the fortified frontier posts within our territory, and should pay for the negroes they had taken away from the Southern States during the war. They had done neither, and Morris was charged to find out what the intentions of the government were in the matter. He was also to find out whether there was a disposition to enter into a commercial treaty with the United States; and finally, he was to sound them as to their sending a minister to America.

On our part we had also failed to fulfil a portion of our treaty obligations, not having complied with the article which provided for the payment of debts due before the war to British merchants. Both sides had been to blame; each, of course, blamed only the other. But now, when we were ready to perform our part, the British refused to perform theirs.

As a consequence, Morris, although he spent most of the year in London, failed to accomplish anything. The feeling in England was hostile to America; to the king, in particular, the very name was hateful. The English

were still sore over their defeat, and hated us because we had been victors; and yet they despised us also, for they thought we should be absolutely powerless except when we were acting merely on the defensive. From the days of the Revolution till the days of the Civil War, the ruling classes of England were bitterly antagonistic to our nation; they always saw with glee any check to our national well-being; they wished us ill, and exulted in our misfortunes, while they sneered at our successes. The results have been lasting, and now work much more to their hurt than to ours. The past conduct of England certainly offers much excuse for, though it cannot in the least justify, the unreasonable and virulent anti-English feeling—that is, the feeling against Englishmen politically and nationally, not socially or individually—which is so strong in many parts of our country where the native American blood is purest.

The English ministry in 1790 probably had the general feeling of the nation behind them in their determination to injure us as much as they could; at any rate, their aim seemed to be, as far as lay in them, to embitter our already existing hostility to their empire. They not only refused to grant us any substantial justice, but they were inclined to inflict on us and on our representatives those petty insults which rankle longer than injuries.

When it came to this point, however, Morris was quite able to hold his own. He had a ready, biting tongue; and, excepting Pitt and Fox, was intellectually superior to any of the public men whom he met. In social position, even as they understood it, he was their equal; they could hardly look down on the brother of a British major-general, and a brother-in-law of the Duchess of Gordon. He was a man of rather fiery cour-

age, and any attacks upon his country were not likely to be made twice in his presence. Besides, he never found the English congenial as friends or companions; he could not sympathize, or indeed get along well, with them. This distaste for their society he always retained, and though he afterward grew to respect them, and to be their warm partisan politically, he was at this time much more friendly to France, and was even helping the French ministers concoct a scheme of warfare against their neighbor. To his bright, impatient temperament, the English awkwardness seemed to be an insuperable obstacle to bringing people together "as in other countries." He satirized the English drawing-rooms, "where the arrangement of the company was stiff and formal, the ladies all ranged in battalia on one side of the room"; and remarked "that the French, having no liberty in their government, have compensated to themselves that misfortune by bestowing a great deal upon society. But that, I fear, in England, is all confined to the House of Commons." Years afterward he wrote to a friend abroad: "Have you reflected that there is more of real society in one week at [a continental watering-place] than in a London year? Recollect that a tedious morning, a great dinner, a boozy afternoon, and dull evening make the sum total of English life. It is admirable for young men who shoot, hunt, drink—but for us! How are we to dispose of ourselves? No. Were I to give you a rendezvous in Europe, it should be on the Continent. I respect, as you know, the English nation highly, and love many individuals among them, but I do not love their manners." Times have changed, and the manners of the islanders with them. Exactly as the "rude Carinthian boor" has become the most polished of mortals, so, after a

like transformation, English society is now perhaps the pleasantest and most interesting in Europe. Were Morris alive to-day, he would probably respect the English as much as he ever did, and like them a good deal more; and, while he might well have his preference for his own country confirmed, yet, if he had to go abroad, it is hard to believe that he would now pass by London in favor of any Continental capital or watering-place.

In acknowledging Washington's letter of appointment, Morris wrote that he did not expect much difficulty, save from the king himself, who was very obstinate, and bore a personal dislike to his former subjects. But his interviews with the minister of foreign affairs, the Duke of Leeds, soon undeceived him. The duke met him with all the little tricks of delay and evasion known to old-fashioned diplomacy; tricks that are always greatly relished by men of moderate ability, and which are successful enough where the game is not very important, as in the present instance, but are nearly useless when the stakes are high and the adversary determined. The worthy nobleman was profuse in expressions of general good-will, and vague to a degree in his answers to every concrete question; affected to misunderstand what was asked of him, and, when he could not do this, "slumbered profoundly" for weeks before making his reply. Morris wrote that "his explanatory comments were more unintelligible than his texts," and was delighted when he heard that he might be replaced by Lord Hawksbury; for the latter, although strongly anti-American, "would at least be an efficient minister," whereas the former was "evidently afraid of committing himself by saying or doing anything positive." He soon concluded that Great Britain was so uncertain as to how matters were going in Europe that

she wished to keep us in a similar state of suspense. She had recovered with marvellous rapidity from the effects of the great war; she was felt on all sides to hold a position of commanding power; this she knew well, and so felt like driving a very hard bargain with any nation, especially with a weak one that she hated. It was particularly difficult to form a commercial treaty. There were very many Englishmen who agreed with a Mr. Irwin, "a mighty sour sort of creature," who assured Morris that he was utterly opposed to all American trade in grain, and that he wished to oblige the British people, by the force of starvation, to raise enough corn for their own consumption. Fox told Morris that he and Burke were about the only two men left who believed that Americans should be allowed to trade in their own bottoms to the British islands; and he also informed him that Pitt was not hostile to America, but simply indifferent, being absorbed in European matters, and allowing his colleagues free hands.

Becoming impatient at the long-continued delay, Morris finally wrote, very courteously but very firmly, demanding some sort of answer, and this produced a momentary activity, and assurances that he was under a misapprehension as to the delay, etc. The subject of the impressment of American sailors into British men-of-war—a matter of chronic complaint throughout our first forty years of national life—now came up; and he remarked to the Duke of Leeds, with a pithy irony that should have made the saying famous: "I believe, my lord, that this is the only instance in which we are not treated as aliens." He proposed a plan which would have at least partially obviated the difficulties in the way of a settlement of the matter, but the duke would do nothing. Neither would he come to any agreement

in reference to the exchange of ministers between the two countries.

Then came an interview with Pitt, and Morris, seeing how matters stood, now spoke out perfectly clearly. In answer to the accusations about our failure wholly to perform certain stipulations of the treaty, after reciting the counter-accusations of the Americans, he brushed them all aside with the remark: "But, sir, what I have said tends to show that these complaints and inquiries are excellent if the parties mean to keep asunder; if they wish to come together, all such matters should be kept out of sight." He showed that the House of Representatives, in a friendly spirit, had recently decided against laying extraordinary restrictions on British vessels in our ports. "Mr. Pitt said that, instead of restrictions, we ought to give them particular privileges, in return for those we enjoy here. I assured him that I knew of none except that of being impressed, a privilege which of all others we least wished to partake of. . . . Mr. Pitt said seriously that they had certainly evinced goodwill to us by what they had done respecting our commerce. I replied therefore, with like seriousness, that their regulations had been dictated with a view to their own interests; and therefore, as we felt no favor, we owed no obligation." Morris realized thoroughly that they were keeping matters in suspense because their behavior would depend upon the contingencies of war or peace with the neighboring powers; he wished to show that, if they acted thus, we would also bide our time till the moment came to strike a telling blow; and accordingly he ended by telling Pitt, with straightforward directness, a truth that was also a threat: "We do not think it worth while to go to war with you for the [frontier] forts; but we know our rights, and will

avail ourselves of them when time and circumstances may suit."

After this conversation he became convinced that we should wait until England herself felt the necessity of a treaty before trying to negotiate one. He wrote Washington "that those who, pursuing the interests of Great Britain, wish to be on the best terms with America, are outnumbered by those whose sour prejudice and hot resentment render them averse to any intercourse except that which may immediately subserve a selfish policy. These men do not yet know America. Perhaps America does not yet know herself. . . . We are yet in but the seeding-time of national prosperity, and it will be well not to mortgage the crop before it is gathered. . . . England will not, I am persuaded, enter into a treaty with us unless we give for it more than it is worth now, and infinitely more than it will be worth hereafter. A present bargain would be that of a young heir with an old usurer. . . . But, should war break out [with a European power], the anti-American party here will agree to *any* terms; for it is more the taste of the medicine which they nauseate than the quantity of the dose."

Accordingly all negotiations were broken off. In America his enemies blamed Morris for this failure. They asserted that his haughty manners and proud bearing had made him unpopular with the ministers, and that his consorting with members of the opposition had still further damaged his cause. The last assertion was wholly untrue; for he had barely more than met Fox and his associates. But on a third point there was genuine reason for dissatisfaction. Morris had confided his purpose to the French minister at London, M. de la Luzerne, doing so because he trusted to the latter's

honor, and did not wish to seem to take any steps unknown to our ally; and he was in all probability also influenced by his constant association and intimacy with the French leaders. Luzerne, however, promptly used the information for his own purposes, letting the English ministers know that he was acquainted with Morris's objects, and thus increasing the weight of France by making it appear that America acted only with her consent and advice. The affair curiously illustrates Jay's wisdom eight years before, when he insisted on keeping Luzerne's superior at that time, Vergennes, in the dark as to our course during the peace negotiations. However, it is not at all likely that Mr. Pitt or the Duke of Leeds were influenced in their course by anything Luzerne said.

Leaving London, Morris made a rapid trip through the Netherlands and up the Rhine. His journals, besides the usual comments on the inns, the bad roads, poor horses, sulky postilions, and the like, are filled with very interesting observations on the character of the country through which he passed, its soil and inhabitants, and the indications they afforded of the national resources. He liked to associate with people of every kind, and he was intensely fond of natural scenery; but, what seems rather surprising in a man of his culture, he apparently cared very little for the great cathedrals, the picture-galleries, and the works of art for which the old towns he visited were so famous.

He reached Paris at the end of November, but was almost immediately called to London again, returning in January, 1791, and making three or four similar trips in the course of the year. His own business affairs took up a great deal of his time. He was engaged in very many different operations, out of which he made a great

deal of money, being a shrewd business man with a strong dash of the speculator. He had to prosecute a suit against the farmers-general of France for a large quantity of tobacco shipped them by contract; and he gives a very amusing description of the visits he made to the judges before whom the case was to be tried. Their occupations were certainly various, being those of a farrier, a goldsmith, a grocer, a currier, a woollen draper, and a bookseller respectively. As a sample of his efforts, take the following: "Return home and dine. At five resume my visits to my judges, and first wait upon the honorable M. Gillet, the grocer, who is in a little cuddy adjoining his shop, at cards. He assures me that the courts are impartial, and alike uninfluenced by farmers, receivers, and grand seigneurs; that they are generally of the same opinion; that he will do everything in his power; and the like. *De l'autre côté*, perfect confidence in the ability and integrity of the court. Wish only to bring the cause to such a point as that I may have the honor to present a memorial. Am vastly sorry to have been guilty of an intrusion upon the amusements of his leisure hours. Hope he will excuse the solicitude of a stranger, and patronize a claim of such evident justice. The whole goes off very well, though I with difficulty restrain my risible faculties. . . . A disagreeable scene, the ridicule of which is so strongly painted to my own eyes that I cannot forbear laughing."

He also contracted to deliver Necker twenty thousand barrels of flour for the relief of Paris; wherein, by the way, he lost heavily. He took part in sundry shipping operations. Perhaps the most lucrative business in which he was engaged was in negotiating the sale of wild lands in America. He even made many efforts to

buy the Virginian and Pennsylvanian domains of the Fairfaxes and the Penns. On behalf of a syndicate, he endeavored to purchase the American debts to France and Spain; these being purely speculative efforts, as it was supposed that the debts could be obtained at quite a low figure, while, under the new Constitution, the United States would certainly soon make arrangements for paying them off. These various operations entailed a wonderful amount of downright hard work; yet all the while he remained not only a close observer of French politics, but, to a certain extent, even an actor in them.

He called upon Lafayette as soon as he was again established in Paris, after his mission to London. He saw that affairs had advanced to such a pitch in France that "it was no longer a question of liberty, but simply who shall be master." He had no patience with those who wished the king to place himself, as they phrased it, at the head of the revolution, remarking: "The trade of a revolutionist appears to me a hard one for a prince." What with the folly of one side and the madness of the other, things were going to pieces very rapidly. At one of his old haunts, the club, the "sentiment aristocratique" had made great headway: one of his friends, De Moustin, now in favor with the king and queen, was "as usual on the high ropes of royal prerogative." Lafayette, however, was still wedded to his theories, and did not appear overglad to see his American friend, all whose ideas and habits of thought were so opposed to his own; while madame was still cooler in her reception. Morris, nothing daunted, talked to his friend very frankly and seriously. He told him that the time had come when all good citizens would be obliged, simply from lack of choice, to cling to the throne; that

the executive must be strengthened, and good and able men put into the council. He pronounced the "thing called a constitution" good for nothing, and showed that the National Assembly was rapidly falling into contempt. He pointed out, for the hundredth time, that each country needed to have its own form of government; that an American constitution would not do for France, for the latter required an even higher-toned system than that of England; and that, above all things, France needed stability. He gave the reasons for his advice clearly and forcibly; but poor Lafayette flinched from it, and could not be persuaded to take any effectual step.

It is impossible to read Morris's shrewd comments on the events of the day, and his plans in reference to them, without wondering that France herself should at the crisis have failed to produce any statesmen to be compared with him for force, insight, and readiness to do what was practically best under the circumstances; but her past history for generations had been such as to make it out of the question for her to bring forth such men as the founders of our own government. Warriors, lawgivers, and diplomats she had in abundance. Statesmen who would be both hard-headed and true-hearted, who would be wise and yet unselfish, who would enact laws for a free people that would make that people freer still, and yet hinder them from doing wrong to their neighbors—statesmen of this order she neither had nor could have had. Indeed, had there been such, it may well be doubted if they could have served France. With a people who made up in fickle ferocity what they lacked in self-restraint, and a king too timid and short-sighted to turn any crisis to advantage, the French statesmen, even had they been as wise as they were

foolish, would hardly have been able to arrest or alter the march of events. Morris said bitterly that France was the country where everything was talked of, and where hardly anything was understood.

He told Lafayette that he thought the only hope of the kingdom lay in a foreign war; it is possible that the idea may have been suggested to him by Lafayette's naïve remark that he believed his troops would readily follow him into action, but that they would not mount guard when it rained. Morris not only constantly urged the French ministers to make war, but actually drew up a plan of campaign for them. He believed it would turn the popular ardor, now constantly inflamed against the aristocrats, into a new channel, and that "there was no word perhaps in the dictionary which would take the place of *aristocrat* so readily as *Anglais*." In proof of the wisdom of his propositions he stated, with absolute truthfulness: "If Britain had declared war in 1774 against the house of Bourbon, the now United States would have bled freely in her cause." He was disgusted with the littleness of the men who, appalled at their own surroundings, and unable to make shift even for the moment, found themselves thrown by chance to the helm and face to face with the wildest storm that had ever shaken a civilized government. Speaking of one of the new ministers, he remarked: "They say he is a good kind of man, which is saying very little"; and again: "You want just now great men, to pursue great measures." Another time, in advising a war—a war of men, not of money—and speaking of the efforts made by the neighboring powers against the revolutionists in Flanders, he told his French friends that they must either suffer for or with their allies; and that the latter was at once the noblest and the safest course.

In a letter to Washington he drew a picture of the chaos as it really was, and at the same time, with wonderful clear-sightedness, showed the great good which the change was eventually to bring to the mass of the people. Remembering how bitter Morris's feelings were against the revolutionists, it is extraordinary that they did not blind him to the good that would in the long run result from their movement. Not another statesman would have been able to set forth so clearly and temperately the benefits that would finally come from the convulsions he saw around him, although he rightly believed that these benefits would be even greater could the hideous excesses of the revolutionists be forthwith stopped and punished.

His letter runs: "This unhappy country, bewildered in the pursuit of metaphysical whimsies, presents to our moral view a mighty ruin. . . . The sovereign, humbled to the level of a beggar without pity, without resources, without authority, without a friend. The Assembly, at once a master and a slave, new in power, wild in theory, raw in practice. It engrosses all functions, though incapable of exercising any, and has taken from this fierce, ferocious people every restraint of religion and of respect." Where this would all end, or what sum of misery would be necessary to change the popular will and awaken the popular heart, he could not say. A glorious opportunity had been lost, and for the time being the revolution had failed. Yet, he went on to say, in the consequences flowing from it he was confident he could see the foundation of future prosperity. For among these consequences were: 1. The abolition of the different rights and privileges which had formerly kept the various provinces asunder. 2. The abolition of feudal tyranny, by which the tenure of real property would be simplified, and the rent no

longer be dependent upon idle vanity, capricious taste, or sullen pride. 3. The throwing into the circle of industry those vast possessions formerly held by the clergy in mortmain, wealth conferred upon them as wages for their idleness. 4. The destruction of the system of venal jurisprudence which had established the pride and privileges of the few on the misery and degradation of the general mass. 5. Above all, the establishment of the principles of true liberty, which would remain as solid facts after the superstructure of metaphysical froth and vapor should have been blown away. Finally, "from the chaos of opinion and the conflict of its jarring elements a new order will at length arise, which, though in some degree the child of chance, may not be less productive of human happiness than the forethought provisions of human speculation." Not one other contemporary statesman could have begun to give so just an estimate of the good the revolution would accomplish; no other could have seen so deeply into its ultimate results, while also keenly conscious of the dreadful evil through which these results were being worked out.

The social life of Paris still went on, though with ever less of gaiety, as the gloom gathered roundabout. Going with Madame de Chastellux to dine with the Duchess of Orleans, Morris was told by her royal highness that she was "ruined," that is, that her income was reduced from four hundred and fifty thousand to two hundred thousand livres a year, so that she could no longer give him good dinners; but if he would come and fast with her, she would be glad to see him. The poor lady was yet to learn by bitter experience that real ruin was something very different from the loss of half of an enormous income.

On another occasion he breakfasted with the duchess,

and was introduced to her father, with whom he agreed to dine. After breakfast she went out walking with him till nearly dinner-time, and gave him the full history of her breach with her husband, Egalité, showing the letters that had passed between them, complaining of his numerous misdeeds, and assuring Morris that what the world had attributed to fondness for her worthless spouse was merely discretion; that she had hoped to bring him to a decent and orderly behavior, but had finally made up her mind that he could only be governed by fear.

Now and then he indulges in a quiet laugh at the absurd pretensions and exaggerated estimates of each other still affected by some of the frequenters of the various salons. "Dine with Madame de Staël. The Abbé Sieyès is here, and descants with much self-sufficiency on government, despising all that has been said or sung on that subject before him; and madame says that his writings and opinions will form in politics a new era, like those of Newton in physics."

After dining with Marmontel, he notes in his diary that his host "thinks soundly"—rare praise for him to bestow on any of the French statesmen of the time. He records a *bon mot* of Talleyrand's. When the Assembly had declared war on the emperor conditionally upon the latter's failing to beg pardon before a certain date, the little bishop remarked that "the nation was *une parvenue*, and of course insolent." At the British ambassador's he met the famous Colonel Tarleton, who did not know his nationality, and amused him greatly by descanting at length on the American war.

He was very fond of the theatre, especially of the Comédie Française, where Préville, whom he greatly admired, was acting in Molière's "Amphitryon." Many

of the plays, whose plots presented in any way analogies to what was actually happening in the political world, raised great excitement among the spectators. Going to see "Brutus" acted, he records that the noise and altercations were tremendous, but that finally the democrats in the parterre got the upper hand by sheer lusty roaring, which they kept up for a quarter of an hour at a time, and, at the conclusion of the piece, insisted upon the bust of Voltaire being crowned and placed on the stage. Soon afterward a tragedy called "Charles Neuf," founded on the massacre of St. Bartholomew, was put on the stage, to help the Assembly in their crusade against the clergy; he deemed it a very extraordinary piece to be represented in a Catholic country, and thought that it would give a fatal blow to the Catholic religion.

The priesthood, high and low, he disliked more than any other set of men; all his comments on them show his contempt. The high prelates he especially objected to. The Bishop of Orleans he considered to be a luxurious old gentleman, "of the kind whose sincerest prayer is for the fruit of good living, one who evidently thought it more important to *speak* than to speak the *truth*." The leader of the great church dignitaries, in their fight for their rich benefices, was the Abbé Maury, who, Morris writes, "is a man who looks like a downright ecclesiastical scoundrel." He met him in Madame de Nadaillac's salon, where were "a party of fierce aristocrats. They have the word 'valet' written on their foreheads in large characters. Maury is formed to govern such men, and they are formed to obey him or any one else. But Maury seems to have too much vanity for a great man." To tell the bare truth is sometimes to make the most venomous comment possible, and this

he evidently felt when he wrote of his meeting with the Cardinal de Rohan: "We talk among other things about religion, for the cardinal is very devout. He was once the lover of Madame de Flahaut's sister."

But as the tremendous changes went on about him, Morris had continually less and less time to spend in mere social pleasures; graver and weightier matters called for his attention, and his diary deals with the shifts and stratagems of the French politicians, and pays little heed to the sayings and manners of nobles, bishops, and ladies of rank.

The talented, self-confident, fearless American, admittedly out of sympathy with what he called "this abominable populace," was now well known; and in their terrible tangle of dangers and perplexities, court and ministry alike turned to him for help. Perhaps there has hardly been another instance where, in such a crisis, the rulers have clutched in their despair at the advice of a mere private stranger sojourning in the land on his own business. The king and his ministers, as well as the queen, kept in constant communication with him. With Montmorin he dined continually, and was consulted at every stage. But he could not prevail on them to adopt the bold, vigorous measures he deemed necessary; his plain speaking startled them, and they feared it would not suit the temper of the people. He drafted numerous papers for them, among others a royal speech, which the king liked, but which his ministers prevented him from using. In fact, it had grown to be hopeless to try to help the court; for the latter pursued each course by fits and starts, now governed by advice from Coblentz, now by advice from Brussels, and then for a brief spasm going its own gait. All the while the people at large knew their own minds no better than

poor Louis knew his, and cheered him with fervent ecstasy one day, only to howl at him with malignant fury the next. With such a monarch and such subjects it is not probable that any plan would have worked well; but Morris's was the ablest as well as the boldest and best defined of the many that were offered to the wretched, halting king; and had his proposed policy been pursued, things might have come out better, and they could not possibly have come out worse.

All through these engrossing affairs, he kept up the liveliest interest in what was going on in his own country, writing home shrewd observations on every step taken. One of his remarks deserves to be kept in mind. In speaking of the desire of European nations to legislate against the introduction of our produce, he says that this effort has after all its bright side; because it will force us "to make great and rapid progress in useful manufactures. This alone is wanting to complete our independence. We shall then be, as it were, a world by ourselves."

CHAPTER X

MINISTER TO FRANCE

In the spring of 1792, Morris received his credentials as minister to France. There had been determined opposition in the Senate to the confirmation of his appointment, which was finally carried only by a vote of sixteen to eleven, mainly through the exertions of Rufus King. His opponents urged the failure of the British negotiations, the evidences repeatedly given of his proud, impatient spirit, and above all his hostility to the French Revolution, as reasons why he should not be made minister. Washington, however, as well as Hamilton, King, and the other Federalists, shared most of Morris's views with regard to the revolution, and insisted upon his appointment.

But the President, as good and wise a friend as Morris had, thought it best to send him a word of warning, coupling with the statement of his own unfaltering trust and regard the reasons why the new diplomat should observe more circumspection than his enemies thought him capable of showing. For his opponents asserted that his brilliant, lively imagination always inclined him to act so promptly as to leave no time for cool judgment, and was, wrote Washington, "the primary cause of those sallies which too often offend, and of that ridicule of character which begets enmity not easy to be forgotten, but which might easily be avoided if it were under the control of caution and prudence. . . . By reciting [their objections] I give you a proof of my friendship, if I give none of my policy."

Morris took his friend's advice in good part, and

profited by it as far as lay in his nature. He knew that he had a task of stupendous difficulty before him; as it would be almost impossible for a minister to steer clear of the quarrels springing from the ferocious hatred borne to each other by the royalists and the various republican factions. To stand *well* with all parties he knew was impossible: but he thought it possible, and merely so, to stand well with the best people in each, without greatly offending the others; and, in order to do this, he had to make up his mind to mingle with the worst as well as the best, to listen unmoved to falsehoods so foul and calumnies so senseless as to seem the ravings of insanity; and meanwhile to wear a front so firm and yet so courteous as to ward off insult from his country and injury from himself during the days when the whole people went crazy with the blood lust, when his friends were butchered by scores around him, and when the rulers had fulfilled Mirabeau's terrible prophecy, and had "paved the streets with their bodies."

But when he began his duties, he was already entangled in a most dangerous intrigue, one of whose very existence he should not, as a foreign minister, have known, still less have entered into. He got enmeshed in it while still a private citizen, and could not honorably withdraw, for it dealt with nothing less than the escape of the king and queen from Paris. His chivalrous sympathy for the two hemmed-in, hunted creatures, threatened by madmen and counselled by fools, joined with his characteristic impulsiveness and fearlessness to incline him to make an effort to save them from their impending doom. A number of plans had been made to get the king out of Paris; and as the managers of each were of necessity ignorant of all the rest, they clashed with and thwarted one another. Morris's

scheme was made in concert with a M. de Monciel, one of the royal ministers, and some other French gentlemen; and their measures were so well taken that they would doubtless have succeeded had not the king's nerve invariably failed him at the critical moment, and brought delay after delay. The Swiss guards, faithful to their salt, were always ready to cover his flight, and Lafayette would have helped them.

Louis preferred Morris's plan to any of the others offered, and gave a most striking proof of his preference by sending to the latter, toward the end of July, to say how much he regretted that his advice had not been followed, and to ask him if he would not take charge of the royal papers and money. Morris was unwilling to take the papers, but finally consented to receive the money, amounting in all to nearly seven hundred and fifty thousand livres, which was to be paid out in hiring and bribing the men who stood in the way of the escape; for most of the revolutionists were as venal as they were bloodthirsty. Still the king lingered; then came the 10th of August; the Swiss guards were slaughtered, and the whole scheme was at an end. Some of the men engaged in the plot were suspected; one, D'Angrémont, was seized and condemned, but he went to his death without betraying his fellows. The others, by the liberal use of the money in Morris's possession, were saved, the authorities being bribed to wink at their escape or concealment. Out of the money that was left advances were made to Monciel and others; finally, in 1796, Morris gave an accurate account of the expenditures to the dead king's daughter, the Duchesse d'Angoulême, then at the Austrian court, and turned over to her the remainder, consisting of a hundred and forty-seven pounds.

Of course all this was work in which no minister had the least right to share; but the whole crisis was one so completely without precedent that it is impossible to blame Morris for what he did. The extraordinary trust reposed in him, and the feeling that his own exertions were all that lay between the two unfortunate sovereigns and their fate roused his gallantry and blinded him to the risk he himself ran, as well as to the hazard to which he put his country's interests. He was under no illusion as to the character of the people whom he was trying to serve. He utterly disapproved the queen's conduct, and he despised the king, noting the latter's feebleness and embarrassment, even on the occasion of his presentation at court; he saw in them "a lack of mettle which would ever prevent them from being truly royal"; but when in their mortal agony they held out their hands to him for aid, his generous nature forbade him to refuse it, nor could he look on unmoved as they went helplessly down to destruction.

The rest of his two years' history as minister forms one of the most brilliant chapters in our diplomatic annals. His boldness, and the frankness with which he expressed his opinions, though they at times irritated beyond measure the factions of the revolutionists who successively grasped a brief but tremendous power, yet awed them, in spite of themselves. He soon learned to combine courage and caution, and his readiness, wit, and dash always gave him a certain hold over the fiery nation to which he was accredited. He was firm and dignified in insisting on proper respect being shown our flag, while he did all he could to hasten the payment of our obligations to France. A very large share of his time, also, was taken up with protesting against the French decrees aimed at neutral—which meant Amer-

ican—commerce, and with interfering to save American shipmasters, who had got into trouble by unwittingly violating them. Like his successor, Mr. Washburne, in the time of the commune, Morris was the only foreign minister who remained in Paris during the terror. He stayed at the risk of his life; and yet, while fully aware of his danger, he carried himself as coolly as if in a time of profound peace, and never flinched for a moment when he was obliged for his country's sake to call to account the rulers of France for the time being—men whose power was as absolute as it was ephemeral and bloody, who had indulged their desire for slaughter with the unchecked ferocity of madmen, and who could by a word have had him slain as thousands had been slain before him. Few foreign ministers have faced such difficulties, and not one has ever come near to facing such dangers as Morris did during his two years' term of service. His feat stands by itself in diplomatic history; and, as a minor incident, the letters and despatches he sent home give a very striking view of the French Revolution.

As soon as he was appointed he went to see the French minister of foreign affairs; and, in answer to an observation of the latter, stated with his customary straightforwardness that it was true that, while a mere private individual, sincerely friendly to France, and desirous of helping her, and whose own nation could not be compromised by his acts, he had freely taken part in passing events, had criticised the constitution, and advised the king and his ministers; but he added that, now that he was a public man, he would no longer meddle with their affairs. To this resolution he kept, save that, as already described, sheer humanity induced him to make an effort to save the king's life. He had predicted what

would ensue as the result of the exaggerated decentralization into which the opponents of absolutism had rushed; when they had split the state up into more than forty thousand sovereignties, each district the sole executor of the law, and the only judge of its propriety, and therefore obedient to it only so long as it listed, and until rendered hostile by the ignorant whim or ferocious impulse of the moment; and now he was to see his predictions come true. In that brilliant and able state paper, the address he had drawn up for Louis to deliver when in 1791 the latter accepted the constitution, the keynote of the situation was struck in the opening words, "It is no longer a king who addresses you, Louis XVI is a private individual"; and he had then scored off, point by point, the faults in a document that created an unwieldy assembly of men unaccustomed to govern, that destroyed the principle of authority, though no other could appeal to a people helpless in their newborn liberty, and that created out of one whole a jarring multitude of fractional sovereignties. Now he was to see one of these same sovereignties rise up in successful rebellion against the government that represented the whole, destroy it and usurp its power, and establish over all France the rule of an anarchic despotism which, by what seems to a free American a gross misnomer, they called a democracy.

All through June, at the beginning of which month Morris had been formally presented at court, the excitement and tumult kept increasing. When, on the 20th, the mob forced the gates of the château, and made the king put on the red cap, Morris wrote in his diary that the constitution had given its last groan. A few days afterward he told Lafayette that in six weeks everything would be over, and tried to persuade him

that his only chance was to make up his mind instantly to fight either for a good constitution or for the wretched piece of paper which bore the name. Just six weeks to a day from the date of this prediction came the 10th of August to verify it.

Throughout July the fevered pulses of the people beat with always greater heat. Looking at the maddened mob, the American minister thanked God from his heart that in his own country there was no such populace, and prayed with unwonted earnestness that our education and morality should forever stave off such an evil. At court even the most purblind dimly saw their doom. Calling there one morning, he chronicles with a matter-of-fact brevity, impressive from its very baldness, that nothing of note had occurred except that they had stayed up all night expecting to be murdered. He wrote home that he could not tell "whether the king would live through the storm; for it blew hard."

His horror of the base mob, composed of people whose kind was absolutely unknown in America, increased continually, as he saw them going on from crimes that were great to crimes that were greater, incited by the demagogues who flattered them and roused their passions and appetites, and blindly raging because they were of necessity disappointed in the golden prospects held out to them. He scorned the folly of the enthusiasts and doctrinaires who had made a constitution all sail and no ballast, that overset at the first gust; who had freed from all restraint a mass of men as savage and licentious as they were wayward; who had put the executive in the power of the legislature, and this latter at the mercy of the leaders who could most strongly influence and inflame the mob. But his contempt for the

victims almost exceeded his anger at their assailants. The king, who could suffer with firmness, and who could act either not at all, or else with the worst possible effect, had the head and heart that might have suited the monkish idea of a female saint, but which were hopelessly out of place in any rational being supposed to be fitted for doing good in the world. Morris wrote home that he knew his friend Hamilton had no particular aversion to kings, and would not believe them to be tigers, but that if Hamilton came to Europe to see for himself, he would surely believe them to be monkeys; the Empress of Russia was the only reigning sovereign whose talents were not "considerably below par." At the moment of the final shock, the court was involved in a set of paltry intrigues "unworthy of anything above the rank of a footman or a chambermaid. Every one had his or her little project, and every little project had some abettors. Strong, manly counsels frightened the weak, alarmed the envious, and wounded the enervated minds of the lazy and luxurious." The few such counsels that appeared were always approved, rarely adopted, and never followed out.

Then, in the sweltering heat of August, the end came. A raving, furious horde stormed the château, and murdered, one by one, the brave mountaineers who gave their lives for a sovereign too weak to be worthy of such gallant bloodshed. King and queen fled to the National Assembly, and the monarchy was over. Immediately after the awful catastrophe Morris wrote to a friend: "The voracity of the court, the haughtiness of the nobles, the sensuality of the church, have met their punishment in the road of their transgressions. The oppressor has been squeezed by the hands of the oppressed; but there remains yet to be acted an awful

scene in this great tragedy, played on the theatre of the universe for the instruction of mankind."

Not the less did he dare everything, and jeopardize his own life in trying to save some at least among the innocent who had been overthrown in the crash of the common ruin. When on the 10th of August the whole city lay abject at the mercy of the mob, hunted men and women, bereft of all they had, and fleeing from a terrible death, with no hiding-place, no friend who could shield them, turned in their terror-struck despair to the one man in whose fearlessness and generous gallantry they could trust. The shelter of Morris's house and flag was sought from early morning till past midnight by people who had nowhere else to go, and who felt that within his walls they were sure of at least a brief safety from the maddened savages in the streets. As far as possible they were sent off to places of greater security; but some had to stay with him till the storm lulled for a moment. An American gentleman who was in Paris on that memorable day, after viewing the sack of the Tuileries, thought it right to go to the house of the American minister. He found him surrounded by a score of people, of both sexes, among them the old Count d'Estaing, and other men of note, who had fought side by side with us in our war for independence, and whom now our flag protected in their hour of direst need. Silence reigned, only broken occasionally by the weeping of the women and children. As his visitor was leaving, Morris took him to one side, and told him that he had no doubt there were persons on the watch who would find fault with his conduct as a minister in receiving and protecting these people; that they had come of their own accord, uninvited. "Whether my house will be a protection to them or to me, God only knows;

but I will not turn them out of it, let what will happen to me; you see, sir, they are all persons to whom our country is more or less indebted, and, had they no such claim upon me, it would be inhuman to force them into the hands of the assassins." No one of Morris's countrymen can read his words even now without feeling a throb of pride in the dead statesman who, a century ago, held up so high the honor of his nation's name in the times when the souls of all but the very bravest were tried and found wanting.

Soon after this he ceased writing in his diary, for fear it might fall into the hands of men who would use it to incriminate his friends; and for the same reason he had also to be rather wary in what he wrote home, as his letters frequently bore marks of being opened, thanks to what he laughingly called "patriotic curiosity." He was, however, perfectly fearless as regards any ill that might befall himself; his circumspection was only exercised on behalf of others, and his own opinions were given as frankly as ever.

He pictured the French as huddled together, in an unreasoning panic, like cattle before a thunder-storm. Their every act increased his distrust of their capacity for self-government. They were for the time agog with their republic, and ready to adopt any form of government with a huzza; but that they would adopt a good form, or, having adopted it, keep it, he did not believe; and he saw that the great mass of the population were already veering round, under the pressure of accumulating horrors, until they would soon be ready to welcome as a blessing even a despotism, if so they could gain security to life and property. They had made the common mistake of believing that to enjoy liberty they had only to abolish authority; and the equally common con-

sequence was that they were now, through anarchy, on the highroad to absolutism. Said Morris: "Since I have been in this country I have seen the worship of many idols, and but little of the true God. I have seen many of these idols broken, and some of them beaten to the dust. I have seen the late constitution in one short year admired as a stupendous monument of human wisdom, and ridiculed as an egregious production of folly and vice. I wish much, very much, the happiness of this inconstant people. I love them, I feel grateful for their efforts in our cause, and I consider the establishment of a good constitution here as the principal means, under Divine Providence, of extending the blessings of freedom to the many millions of my fellow men who groan in bondage on the continent of Europe. But I do not greatly indulge the flattering illusions of hope, because I do not yet perceive that reformation of morals without which liberty is but an empty sound." These words are such as could only come from a genuine friend of France, and champion of freedom; from a strong, earnest man, saddened by the follies of dreamers, and roused to stern anger by the licentious wickedness of scoundrels who used the name of liberty to cloak the worst abuses of its substance.

His stay in Paris was now melancholy indeed. The city was shrouded in a gloom only relieved by the frenzied tumults that grew steadily more numerous. The ferocious craving once roused could not be sated; the thirst grew ever stronger as the draughts were deeper. The danger to Morris's own person merely quickened his pulses, and roused his strong, brave nature; he liked excitement, and the strain that would have been too tense for weaker nerves keyed his own up to a fierce, half-exultant thrilling. But the woes that befell those

who had befriended him caused him the keenest grief. It was almost unbearable to be seated quietly at dinner, and hear by accident "that a friend was on his way to the place of execution," and to have to sit still and wonder which of the guests dining with him would be the next to go to the scaffold. The vilest criminals swarmed in the streets, and amused themselves by tearing the earrings from women's ears, and snatching away their watches. When the priests shut up in the *carnes* and the prisoners in the *abbaie* were murdered, the slaughter went on all day, and eight hundred men were engaged in it.

He wrote home that, to give a true picture of France, he would have to paint it like an Indian warrior, black and red. The scenes that passed were literally beyond the imagination of the American mind. The most hideous and nameless atrocities were so common as to be only alluded to incidentally, and to be recited in the most matter-of-fact way in connection with other events. For instance, a man applied to the Convention for a recompense for damage done to his quarry, a pit dug deep through the surface of the earth into the stone bed beneath: the damage consisted in such a number of dead bodies having been thrown into the pit as to choke it up so that he could no longer get men to work it. Hundreds, who had been the first in the land, were thus destroyed without form or trial, and their bodies thrown like dead dogs into the first hole that offered. Two hundred priests were killed for no other crime than having been conscientiously scrupulous about taking the prescribed oath. The guillotine went smartly on, watched with a devilish merriment by the fiends who were themselves to perish by the instrument their own hands had wrought. "Heaven only knew

who was next to drink of the dreadful cup; as far as man could tell, there was to be no lack of liquor for some time to come."

Among the new men who, one after another, sprang into the light, to maintain their unsteady footing as leaders for but a brief time before toppling into the dark abyss of death or oblivion that waited for each and all, Dumouriez was for the moment the most prominent. He stood toward the Gironde much as Lafayette had stood toward the Constitutionalists of 1789: he led the army, as Lafayette once had led it; and as the constitutional monarchists had fallen before his fellow republicans, so both he and they were to go down before the even wilder extremists of the "Mountain." For the factions in Paris, face to face with the banded might of the European monarchies, and grappling in a grim death-struggle with the counter-revolutionists of the provinces, yet fought one another with the same ferocity they showed toward the common foe. Nevertheless, success was theirs; for against opponents only less wicked than themselves they moved with an infinitely superior fire and enthusiasm. Reeking with the blood of the guiltless, steeped in it to the lips, branded with fresh memories of crimes and infamies without number, and yet feeling in their very marrow that they were avenging centuries of grinding and intolerable thraldom, and that the cause for which they fought was just and righteous; with shameless cruelty and corruption eating into their hearts' core, yet with their foreheads kindled by the light of a glorious morning—they moved with a ruthless energy that paralyzed their opponents, the worn-out, tottering, crazy despotisms, rotten with vice, despicable in their ludicrous pride of caste, moribund in their military pedantry and fore-

doomed to perish in the conflict they had courted. The days of Danton and Robespierre are not days to which a French patriot cares to look back; but at any rate he can regard them without the shame he must feel when he thinks of the times of Louis Quinze. Danton and his like, at least, were men, and stood far, far above the palsied coward—a eunuch in his lack of all virile virtues —who misruled France for half a century; who, with his followers, indulged in every crime and selfish vice known, save only such as needed a particle of strength, or the least courage, in the committing.

Morris first met Dumouriez when the latter was minister of foreign affairs, shortly before the poor king was driven from the Tuileries. He dined with him, and afterward noted down that the society was noisy and in bad style; for the grace and charm of French social life were gone, and the raw republicans were ill at ease in the drawing-room. At this time Morris commented often on the change in the look of Paris: all his gay friends gone; the city sombre and uneasy. When he walked through the streets, in the stifling air of a summer hot beyond precedent, as if the elements sympathized with the passions of men, he met, instead of the brilliant company of former days, only the few peaceable citizens left, hurrying on their ways with frightened watchfulness; or else groups of lolling ruffians, with sinister eyes and brutalized faces; or he saw in the Champs de Mars squalid ragamuffins signing the petition for the *déchéance*.

Morris wrote Washington that Dumouriez was a bold, determined man, bitterly hostile to the Jacobins and all the extreme revolutionary clubs, and, once he was in power, willing to risk his own life in the effort to put them down. However, the hour of the Jacobins had not

yet struck, and the revolution had now been permitted to gather such headway that it could be stopped only by a master genius; and Dumouriez was none such.

Still he was an able man, and, as Morris wrote home, in his military operations he combined the bravery of a skilled soldier and the arts of an astute politician. To be sure, his victories were not in themselves very noteworthy; the artillery skirmish at Valmy was decided by the reluctance of the Germans to come on, not by the ability of the French to withstand them; and at Jemappes the imperialists were hopelessly outnumbered. Still the results were most important, and Dumouriez overran Flanders in the face of hostile Europe. He at once proceeded to revolutionize the government of his conquest in the most approved French fashion, which was that all the neighbors of France should receive liberty whether or no, and should moreover pay the expense of having it thrust upon them; accordingly he issued a proclamation to his new fellow citizens, "which might be summed up in a few words as being an order to them to be free forthwith, according to his ideas of freedom, on pain of military execution."

He had things all his own way for the moment, but after a while he was defeated by the Germans; then, while the Gironde tottered to its fall, he fled to the very foes he had been fighting, as the only way of escaping death from the men whose favorite he had been. Morris laughed bitterly at the fickle people. One anecdote he gives is worth preserving: "It is a year ago that a person who mixed in tumults to see what was doing, told me of a *sans-culottes* who, bellowing against poor Lafayette, when Petion appeared, changed at once his note to '*Vive Petion!*' and then, turning round to one of his companions, 'Vois tu! C'est notre ami, n'est-ce

pas? Eh bien, il passera comme les autres.' And, lo! the prophecy is fulfilled; and I this instant learn that Petion, confined to his room as a traitor or conspirator, has fled, on the 24th of June, 1793, from those whom he sent, on the 20th of June, 1792, to assault the king in the Tuileries. In short you will find, in the list of those who were ordered by their brethren to be arrested, the names of those who have proclaimed themselves to be the prime movers of the revolution of the 10th of August, and the fathers of the republic."

About the time the *sans-culottes* had thus bellowed against Lafayette, the latter met Morris, for the first time since he was presented at court as minister, and at once spoke to him in his tone of ancient familiarity. The Frenchman had been brought at last to realize the truth of his American friend's theories and predictions. It was much too late to save himself, however. After the 10th of August he was proclaimed by the Assembly, found his troops falling away from him, and fled over the frontier; only to be thrown into prison by the allied monarchs, who acted with their usual folly and baseness. Morris, contemptuously impatient of the part he had played, wrote of him: "Thus his circle is completed. He has spent his fortune on a revolution, and is now crushed by the wheel which he put in motion. He lasted longer than I expected." But this momentary indignation soon gave way to a generous sympathy for the man who had served America so well, and who, if without the great abilities necessary to grapple with the tumult of French affairs, had yet always acted with such unselfish purity of motive. Lafayette, as soon as he was imprisoned, wrote to the American minister in Holland, alleging that he had surrendered his position as a French subject and was now an American citizen, and request-

ing the American representatives in Europe to procure his release. His claim was of course untenable; and, though the American Government did all it could on his behalf through its foreign ministers, and though Washington himself wrote a strong letter of appeal to the Austrian emperor, he remained in prison until the peace, several years later.

All Lafayette's fortune was gone, and while in prison he was reduced to want. As soon as Morris heard this, he had the sum of ten thousand florins forwarded to the prisoner by the United States bankers at Amsterdam; pledging his own security for the amount, which was, however, finally allowed by the government under the name of compensation for Lafayette's military services in America. Morris was even more active in befriending Madame de Lafayette and her children. To the former he lent from his own private funds a hundred thousand livres, enabling her to pay her debts to the many poor people who had rendered services to her family. To the proud, sensitive lady the relief was great, much though it hurt her to be under any obligation: she wrote to her friend that he had broken the chains that loaded her down, and had done it in a way that made her feel the consolation, rather than the weight, of the obligation. But he was to do still more for her; for, when she was cast into prison by the savage Parisian mob, his active influence on her behalf saved her from death. In a letter to him, written some time later, she says, after speaking of the money she had borrowed: "This is a slight obligation, it is true, compared with that of my life, but allow me to remember both while life lasts, with a sentiment of gratitude which it is precious to feel."

There were others whose fortunes turned with the

wheel of fate, for whom Morris felt no such sympathy as for the Lafayettes. Among the number was the Duke of Orleans, now transformed into *citoyen Egalité*. Morris credited this graceless debauchee with criminal ambitions which he probably did not possess, saying that he doubted the public virtue of a profligate, and could not help distrusting such a man's pretensions; nor is it likely that he regretted much the fate of the man who died under the same guillotine which, with his assent, had fallen on the neck of the king, his cousin.

It needed no small amount of hardihood for a man of Morris's prominence and avowed sentiments to stay in Paris when Death was mowing round him with a swath at once so broad and so irregular. The power was passing rapidly from hand to hand, through a succession of men fairly crazy in their indifference to bloodshed. Not a single other minister of a neutral nation dared stay. In fact, the foreign representatives were preparing to go away even before the final stroke was given to the monarchy, and soon after the 10th of August the entire *corps diplomatique* left Paris as rapidly as the various members could get their passports. These the new republican government was at first very reluctant to grant; indeed, when the Venetian ambassador started off he was very ignominiously treated and brought back. Morris went to the British ambassador's to take leave, having received much kindness from him, and having been very intimate in his house. He found Lord Gower in a tearing passion because he could not get passports; he had burned his papers, and strongly advised his guest to do likewise. On this advice the latter refused to act, nor would he take the broad hints given him to the effect that honor required him to quit the country. Morris could not help showing his amusement at the

fear and anger exhibited at the ambassador's, "which exhibition of spirits his lordship could hardly bear." Talleyrand, who was getting his own passport, also did all in his power to persuade the American minister to leave, but without avail. Morris was not a man to be easily shaken in any determination he had taken after careful thought. He wrote back to Jefferson that his opinion was directly opposed to the views of such people as had tried to persuade him that his own honor, and that of America, required him to leave France; and that he was inclined to attribute such counsel mainly to fear. It was true that the position was not without danger; but he presumed that, when the President named him to the embassy, it was not for his own personal pleasure or safety, but for the interests of the country; and these he could certainly serve best by staying.

He was able to hold his own only by a mixture of tact and firmness. Any signs of flinching would have ruined him outright. He would submit to no insolence. The minister of foreign affairs was, with his colleagues, engaged in certain schemes in reference to the American debt, which were designed to further their own private interests; he tried to bully Morris into acquiescence, and, on the latter's pointblank refusal, sent him a most insulting letter. Morris promptly retorted by demanding his passports. France, however, was very desirous not to break with the United States, the only friend she had left in the world; and the offending minister sent a sullen letter of apology, asking him to reconsider his intention to leave, and offering entire satisfaction for every point of which he complained. Accordingly Morris stayed.

He was, however, continually exposed to insults and worries, which were always apologized for by the gov-

ernment for the time being, on the ground, no doubt true, that in such a period of convulsions it was impossible to control their subordinate agents. Indeed, the changes from one form of anarchy to another went on so rapidly that the laws of nations had small chance of observance.

One evening a number of people, headed by a commissary of the section, entered his house, and demanded to search it for arms said to be hidden therein. Morris took a high tone, and was very peremptory with them; told them that they should not examine his house, that it held no arms, and moreover that, if he had possessed any, they should not touch one of them; he also demanded the name of "the blockhead or rascal" who had informed against him, announcing his intention to bring him to punishment. Finally he got them out of the house, and the next morning the commissary called with many apologies, which were accepted.

Another time he was arrested in the street for not having a *carté de citoyen*, but he was released as soon as it was found out who he was. Again he was arrested while travelling in the country, on the pretense that his passport was out of date; an insult for which the government at once made what amends they could. His house was also visited another time by armed men, whom, as before, he persuaded to go away. Once or twice, in the popular tumults, even his life was in danger; on one occasion it is said that it was only saved by the fact of his having a wooden leg, which made him known to the mob as "a cripple of the American war for freedom." Rumors even got abroad in England and America that he had been assassinated.

Morris's duties were manifold, and as harassing to himself as they were beneficial to his country. Some-

times he would interfere on behalf of America as a whole, and endeavor to get obnoxious decrees of the Assembly repealed; and again he would try to save some private citizen of the United States who had got himself into difficulties. Reports of the French minister of foreign affairs, as well as reports of the *comité de salut public*, alike bear testimony to the success of his endeavors, whenever success was possible, and unconsciously show the value of the services he rendered to his country. Of course it was often impossible to obtain complete redress, because, as Morris wrote home, the government, while all-powerful in certain cases, was in others not merely feeble, but enslaved, and was often obliged to commit acts the consequences of which the nominal leaders both saw and lamented. Morris also, while doing all he could for his fellow citizens, was often obliged to choose between their interests and those of the nation at large; and he, of course, decided in favor of the latter, though well aware of the clamor that was certain to be raised against him in consequence by those who, as he caustically remarked, found it the easiest thing in the world to get anything they wanted from the French Government *until they had tried.*

One of his most important transactions was in reference to paying off the debt due by America for amounts loaned her during the war for independence. The interest and a part of the principal had already been paid. At the time Morris was made minister, the United States had a large sum of money, destined for the payment of the public debt, lying idle in the hands of the bankers at Amsterdam; and this sum both Morris and the American minister to Holland, Mr. Short, thought could be well applied to the payment of part of our remaining obligation to France. The French Government

was consulted, and agreed to receive the sum; but hardly was the agreement entered into before the monarchy was overturned. The question at once arose as to whether the money could be rightfully paid over to the men who had put themselves at the head of affairs, and who, a month hence, might themselves be ousted by others who would not acknowledge the validity of a payment made to them. Short thought the payment should be stopped, and, as it afterward turned out, the home authorities agreed with him. But Morris thought otherwise, and paid over the amount. Events fully justified his course, for France never made any difficulty in the matter, and even had she done so, as Morris remarked, America had the staff in her own hands, and could walk which way she pleased, for she owed more money, and in the final adjustment could insist on the amount paid being allowed on account of the debt.

The French executive council owed Morris gratitude for his course in this matter; but they became intensely irritated with him shortly afterward because he refused to fall in with certain proposals they made to him as to the manner of applying part of the debt to the purchase of provisions and munitions for San Domingo. Morris had good reason to believe that there was a private speculation at the bottom of this proposal, and declined to accede to it. The urgency with which it was made, and the wrath which his course excited, confirmed his suspicions, and he persisted in his refusal although it almost brought about a break with the men then carrying on the government. Afterward, when these men fell with the Gironde, he wrote home: "I mentioned to you the plan of a speculation on drafts to have been made on the United States, could my concurrence have been procured. Events have shown that

this speculation would have been a good one to the parties, who would have gained (and the French nation of course have lost) about fifty thousand pounds sterling in eighty thousand. I was informed at that time that the disappointed parties would attempt to have me recalled, and some more tractable character sent, who would have the good sense to look after his own interest. Well, sir, nine months have elapsed, and now, if I were capable of such things, I think it would be no difficult matter to have some of them hanged; indeed it is highly probable that they will experience a fate of that sort."

Much of his time was also taken up in remonstrating against the attacks of French privateers on American shipping. These, however, went steadily on until, half a dozen years afterward, we took the matter into our own hands, and in the West Indies inflicted a smart drubbing, not only on the privateers of France, but on her regular men-of-war as well. He also did what he could for the French officers who had served in America during the war for independence, most of whom were forced to flee from France after the outbreak of the revolution.

His letters home, even after his regular duties had begun to be engrossing, contained a running commentary on the events that were passing around him. His forecasts of events within France were remarkably shrewd, and he displayed a wonderful insight into the motives and characters of the various leaders; but at first he was all at sea in his estimate of the military situation, being much more at home among statesmen than soldiers. He had expected the allied sovereigns to make short work of the raw republican armies, and was amazed at the success of the latter. But he very

soon realized how the situation stood; that whereas the Austrian and Prussian troops simply came on in well-drilled reluctant obedience to their commanding officers, the soldiers of France, on the contrary, were actuated by a fiery spirit the like of which had hardly been seen since the crusades. The bitterness of the contest was appalling, and so was the way in which the ranks of the contestants were thinned out. The extreme republicans believed in their creed with a furious faith; and they were joined by their fellow citizens with an almost equal zeal, when once it had become evident that the invaders were hostile not only to the republic but to France itself, and very possibly meditated its dismemberment.

When the royal and imperial forces invaded France in 1792, they threatened such ferocious vengeance as to excite the most desperate resistance, and yet they backed up their high-sounding words by deeds so faulty, weak, and slow as to make themselves objects of contempt rather than dread. The Duke of Brunswick in particular, as a prelude to some very harmless military manœuvres, issued a singularly lurid and foolish manifesto, announcing that he would deliver up Paris to utter destruction and would give over all the soldiers he captured to military execution. Morris said that his address was in substance, "Be all against me, for I am opposed to you all, and make a good resistance, for there is no longer any hope"; and added that it would have been wiser to have begun with some great success and then to have carried the danger near those whom it was desired to intimidate. As it was, the duke's campaign failed ignominiously, and all the invaders were driven back, for France rose as one man, her warriors overflowed on every side, and bore down all her foes by sheer weight of numbers and impetuous enthu-

siasm. Her government was a despotism as well as an anarchy; it was as totally free from the drawbacks as from the advantages of the democratic system that it professed to embody. Nothing could exceed the merciless energy of the measures adopted. Half-way wickedness might have failed; but a wholesale murder of the disaffected, together with a confiscation of all the goods of the rich, and a vigorous conscription of the poor for soldiers, secured success, at least for the time being. The French made it a war of men; so that the price of labor rose enormously at once, and the condition of the working classes forthwith changed greatly for the better —one good result of the revolution, at any rate.

Morris wrote home very soon after the 10th of August that the then triumphant revolutionists, the Girondists or party of Brissot, who had supplanted the moderate party of Lafayette exactly as the latter had succeeded the aristocracy, would soon in their turn be overthrown by men even more extreme and even more bloodthirsty; and that thus it would go on, wave after wave, until at last the wizard arose who could still them. By the end of the year the storm had brewed long enough to be near the bursting point. One of the promoters of the last outbreak, now himself marked as a victim, told Morris that he personally would die hard, but that most of his colleagues, though like him doomed to destruction, and though so fierce in dealing with the moderate men, now showed neither the nerve nor hardihood that alone could stave off the catastrophe.

Meanwhile the king, as Morris wrote home, showed in his death a better spirit than his life had promised; for he died in a manner becoming his dignity, with calm courage, praying that his foes might be forgiven and his deluded people be benefited by his death—his words

from the scaffold being drowned by the drums of Santerre. As a whole, the Gironde had opposed putting the king to death, and thus capping the structure whose foundations they had laid; they held back all too late. The fabric of their system was erected on a quagmire, and it now settled down and crushed the men who had built it. "All people of morality and intelligence had long agreed that as yet republican virtues were not of Gallic growth"; and so the power slipped naturally into the grasp of the lowest and most violent, of those who were loudest to claim the possession of republican principles, while in practice showing that they had not even the dimmest idea of what such principles meant.

The leaders were quite at the mercy of the gusts of fierce passion that swayed the breasts of their brutal followers. Morris wrote home that the nominal rulers, or rather the few by whom these rulers were directed, had finally gained very just ideas of the value of popular opinion; but that they were not in a condition to act according to their knowledge; and that if they were able to reach harbor there would be quite as much of good luck as of good management about it, and, at any rate, a part of the crew would have to be thrown overboard.

Then the Mountain rose under Danton and Marat, and the party of the Gironde was entirely put down. The leaders were cast into prison, with the certainty before their eyes that the first great misfortune to France would call them from their dungeons to act as expiatory victims. The Jacobins ruled supreme, and under them the government became a despotism in principle as well as in practice. Part of the Convention arrested the rest; and the revolutionary tribunals ruled red-handed, with a whimsical and ferocious tyranny.

Said Morris: "It is an emphatical phrase among the patriots that *terror is the order of the day;* some years have elapsed since Montesquieu wrote that the principle of arbitrary governments is *fear.*" The prisons were choked with *suspects,* and blood flowed more freely than ever. Terror had reached its highest point. Danton was soon to fall before Robespierre. Among a host of other victims the queen died, with a brave dignity that made people half forget her manifold faults; and Philippe Egalité, the dissolute and unprincipled scoundrel, after a life than which none could be meaner and more unworthy, now at the end went to his death with calm and unflinching courage.

One man had a very narrow escape. This was Thomas Paine, the Englishman, who had at one period rendered such a striking service to the cause of American independence, while the rest of his life had been as ignoble as it was varied. He had been elected to the Convention, and, having sided with the Gironde, was thrown into prison by the Jacobins. He at once asked Morris to demand him as an American citizen; a title to which he of course had no claim. Morris refused to interfere too actively, judging rightly that Paine would be saved by his own insignificance and would serve his own interests best by keeping still. So the filthy little atheist had to stay in prison, "where he amused himself with publishing a pamphlet against Jesus Christ." There are infidels and infidels; Paine belonged to the variety—whereof America possesses at present one or two shining examples—that apparently esteems a bladder of dirty water as the proper weapon with which to assail Christianity. It is not a type that appeals to the sympathy of an onlooker, be said onlooker religious or otherwise.

Morris never paid so much heed to the military events as to the progress of opinion in France, believing "that such a great country must depend more upon interior sentiment than exterior operations." He took a half-melancholy, half-sardonic interest in the overthrow of the Catholic religion by the revolutionists; who had assailed it with the true French weapon, ridicule, but ridicule of a very grim and unpleasant kind. The people who five years before had fallen down in the dirt as the consecrated matter passed by, now danced the carmagnole in holy vestments, and took part in some other mummeries a great deal more blasphemous. At the famous Feast of Reason, which Morris described as a kind of opera performed in Notre Dame, the president of the Convention, and other public characters, adored on bended knees a girl who stood in the place *ci-devant* most holy to personate Reason herself. This girl, Saunier by name, followed the trades of an opera dancer and harlot; she was "very beautiful and next door to an idiot as to her intellectual gifts." Among her feats was having appeared in a ballet in a dress especially designed, by the painter David, at her bidding, to be more indecent than nakedness. Altogether she was admirably fitted, both morally and mentally, to personify the kind of reason shown and admired by the French revolutionists.

Writing to a friend who was especially hostile to Romanism, Morris once remarked, with the humor that tinged even his most serious thoughts, "Every day of my life gives me reason to question my own infallibility; and of course leads me farther from confiding in that of the Pope. But I have lived to see a new religion arise. It consists in a denial of all religion, and its votaries have the superstition of not being superstitious.

They have this with as much zeal as any other sect, and are as ready to lay waste the world in order to make proselytes." Another time, speaking of his country place at Sainport, to which he had retired from Paris, he wrote: "We are so scorched by a long drought that in spite of all philosophic notions we are beginning our procession to obtain the favor of the *bon Dieu*. Were it proper for *un homme public et protestant* to interfere, I should be tempted to tell them that mercy is before sacrifice." Those individuals of arrested mental development who now make pilgrimages to our Lady of Lourdes had plenty of prototypes, even in the atheistical France of the revolution.

In his letters home Morris occasionally made clear-headed comments on American affairs. He considered that "we should be unwise in the extreme to involve ourselves in the contests of European nations, where our weight could be but small, though the loss to ourselves would be certain. We ought to be extremely watchful of foreign affairs, but there is a broad line between vigilance and activity." Both France and England had violated their treaties with us; but the latter "had behaved worst, and with deliberate intention." He especially laid stress upon the need of our having a navy; "with twenty ships of the line at sea no nation on earth will dare to insult us"; even aside from individual losses, five years of war would involve more national expense than the support of a navy for twenty years, and until we rendered ourselves respectable, we should continue to be insulted. He never showed greater wisdom than in his views about our navy; and his party, the Federalists, started to give us one; but it had hardly been begun before the Jeffersonians came into power, and, with singular foolishness, stopped the work.

Washington heartily sympathized with Morris's views as to the French Revolution; he wrote him that events had more than made good his gloomiest predictions. Jefferson, however, was utterly opposed to his theories, and was much annoyed at the forcible way in which he painted things as they were; characteristically enough, he only showed his annoyance by indirect methods—leaving Morris's letters unanswered, keeping him in the dark as to events at home, etc. Morris understood all this perfectly, and was extremely relieved when Randolph became secretary of state in Jefferson's stead. Almost immediately afterward, however, he was himself recalled. The United States, having requested the French Government to withdraw Genet, a harlequin rather than a diplomat, it was done at once, and in return a request was forwarded that the United States would reciprocate by relieving Morris, which of course had to be done also. The revolutionary authorities both feared and disliked Morris; he could neither be flattered nor bullied, and he was known to disapprove of their excesses. They also took umbrage at his haughtiness; an unfortunate expression he used in one of his official letters to them, "ma cour," gave great offense, as being unrepublican—precisely as they had previously objected to Washington's using the phrase "your people" in writing to the king.

Washington wrote him a letter warmly approving of his past conduct. Nevertheless Morris was not overpleased at being recalled. He thought that, as things then were in France, any minister who gave satisfaction to its government would prove forgetful of the interests of America. He was probably right; at any rate, what he feared was just what happened under his successor, Monroe—a very amiable gentleman, but distinctly one

who comes in the category of those whose greatness is thrust upon them. However, under the circumstances, it was probably impossible for our government to avoid recalling Morris.

He could say truthfully: "I have the consolation to have made no sacrifice either of personal or national dignity, and I believe I should have obtained everything if the American government had refused to recall me." His services had been invaluable to us; he had kept our national reputation at a high point, by the scrupulous heed with which he saw that all our obligations were fulfilled, as well as by the firm courage with which he insisted on our rights being granted us. He believed "that all our treaties, however onerous, must be strictly fulfilled according to their true intent and meaning. The honest nation is that which, like the honest man, 'hath to its plighted faith and vow forever firmly stood, and though it promise to its loss, yet makes that promise good'"; and in return he demanded that others should mete to us the same justice we meted to them. He met each difficulty the instant it arose, ever on the alert to protect his country and his countrymen; and what an ordinary diplomat could barely have done in time of peace, he succeeded in doing amid the wild, shifting tumult of the revolution, when almost every step he made was at his own personal hazard. He took precisely the right stand; had he taken too hostile a position, he would have been driven from the country, whereas had he been a sympathizer, he would have more or less compromised America, as his successor afterward did. We have never had a foreign minister who deserved more honor than Morris.

One of the noteworthy features in his letters home

was the accuracy with which he foretold the course of events in the political world. Luzerne once said to him, "Vous dites toujours les choses extraordinaires qui se realisent"; and many other men, after some given event had taken place, were obliged to confess their wonder at the way in which Morris's predictions concerning it had been verified. A notable instance was his writing to Washington: "Whatever may be the lot of France in remote futurity . . . it seems evident that she must soon be governed by a single despot. Whether she will pass to that point through the medium of a triumvirate or other small body of men, seems as yet undetermined. I think it most probable that she will." This was certainly a remarkably accurate forecast as to the precise stages by which the already existing despotism was to be concentrated in a single individual. He always insisted that, though it was difficult to foretell how a single man would act, yet it was easy with regard to a mass of men, for their peculiarities neutralized each other, and it was necessary only to pay heed to the instincts of the average animal. He also gave wonderfully clear-cut sketches of the more prominent actors in affairs; although one of his maxims was that "in examining historical facts we are too apt to ascribe to individuals the events which are produced by general causes." Danton, for instance, he described as always believing, and, what was worse for himself, maintaining, that a popular system of government was absurd in France; that the people were too ignorant, too inconstant, too corrupt, and felt too much the need of a master; in short, that they had reached the point where Cato was a madman, and Cæsar a necessary evil. He acted on these principles; but he was too voluptuous for his ambition, too indolent to acquire supreme power,

and he cared for great wealth rather than great fame; so he "fell at the feet of Robespierre." Similarly, said Morris, there passed away all the men of the 10th of August, all the men of the 2d of September; the same mob that hounded them on with wild applause when they grasped the blood-stained reins of power, a few months later hooted at them with ferocious derision as they went their way to the guillotine. Paris ruled France, and the *sans-culottes* ruled Paris; factions continually arose, waging inexplicable war, each in turn acquiring a momentary influence which was founded on fear alone, and all alike unable to build up any stable or lasting government.

Each new stroke of the guillotine weakened the force of liberal sentiment, and diminished the chances of a free system. Morris wondered only that, in a country ripe for a tyrant's rule, four years of convulsions among twenty-four millions of people had brought forth neither a soldier nor yet a statesman, whose head was fitted to wear the cap that fortune had woven. Despising the mob as utterly as did Oliver Cromwell himself, and realizing the supine indifference with which the French people were willing to accept a master, he yet did full justice to the pride with which they resented outside attack, and the enthusiasm with which they faced their foes. He saw the immense resources possessed by a nation to whom war abroad was a necessity for the preservation of peace at home, and with whom bankruptcy was but a starting-point for fresh efforts. The whole energy and power lay in the hands of the revolutionists; the men of the old régime had fled, leaving only that "waxen substance," the propertied class, "who in foreign wars count so much, and in civil wars so little." He had no patience with those despicable beings, the

traders and merchants who have forgotten how to fight, the rich who are too timid to guard their wealth, the men of property, large or small, who need peace, and yet have not the sense and courage to be always prepared to conquer it.

In his whole attitude toward the revolution, Morris represents better than any other man the clear-headed, practical statesman, who is genuinely devoted to the cause of constitutional freedom. He was utterly opposed to the old system of privilege on the one hand, and to the wild excesses of the fanatics on the other. The few liberals of the revolution were the only men in it who deserve our true respect. The republicans who champion the deeds of the Jacobins are traitors to their own principles; for the spirit of Jacobinism, instead of being identical with, is diametrically opposed to the spirit of true liberty. Jacobinism, socialism, communism, nihilism, and anarchism—these are the real foes of a democratic republic, for each one, if it obtains control, obtains it only as the sure forerunner of a despotic tyranny and of some form of the one-man power.

Morris, an American, took a clearer and truer view of the French Revolution than did any of the contemporary European observers. Yet while with them it was the all-absorbing event of the age, with him, as is evident by his writings, it was merely an important episode; for to him it was dwarfed by the American Revolution of a decade or two back. To the Europeans of the present day, as yet hardly awake to the fact that already the change has begun that will make Europe but a fragment, instead of the whole, of the civilized world, the French Revolution is the great historical event of our times. But in reality it affected only the people of western and central Europe; not the Russians,

not the English-speaking nations, not the Spaniards who dwelt across the Atlantic. America and Australia had their destinies moulded by the crisis of 1776, not by the crisis of 1789. What the French Revolution was to the states within Europe, that the American Revolution was to the continents without.

CHAPTER XI

STAY IN EUROPE

Monroe, as Morris's successor, entered upon his new duties with an immense flourish, and rapidly gave a succession of startling proofs that he was a minister altogether too much to the taste of the frenzied Jacobinical republicans to whom he was accredited. Indeed, his capers were almost as extraordinary as their own, and seem rather like the antics of some of the early French commanders in Canada, in their efforts to ingratiate themselves with their Indian allies, than like the performance we should expect from a sober Virginian gentleman on a mission to a civilized nation. He stayed long enough to get our affairs into a snarl, and was then recalled by Washington, receiving from the latter more than one scathing rebuke.

However, the fault was really less with him than with his party and with those who sent him. Monroe was an honorable man with a very unoriginal mind, and he simply reflected the wild, foolish views held by all his fellows of the Jeffersonian democratic-republican school concerning France—for our politics were still French and English, but not yet American. His appointment was an excellent example of the folly of trying to carry on a government on a "non-partisan" basis. Washington was only gradually weaned from this theory by bitter experience; both Jefferson and Monroe helped to teach him the lesson. It goes without saying that in a well-ordered government the great bulk of the employees in the civil service, the men whose functions

are merely to execute faithfully routine departmental work, should hold office during good behavior, and should be appointed without reference to their politics; but if the higher public servants, such as the heads of departments and the foreign ministers, are not in complete accord with their chief, the only result can be to introduce halting indecision and vacillation into the counsels of the nation, without gaining a single compensating advantage, and without abating by one iota the virulence of party passion. To appoint Monroe, an extreme Democrat, to France, while at the same time appointing Jay, a strong Federalist, to England, was not only an absurdity which did nothing toward reconciling the Federalists and Democrats, but, bearing in mind how these parties stood respectively toward England and France, it was also an actual wrong, for it made our foreign policy seem double-faced and deceitful. While one minister was formally embracing such of the Parisian statesmen as had hitherto escaped the guillotine, and was going through various other theatrical performances that do not appeal to any but a Gallic mind, his fellow was engaged in negotiating a treaty in England that was so obnoxious to France as almost to bring us to a rupture with her. The Jay treaty was not altogether a good one, and a better might perhaps have been secured; still, it was better than nothing, and Washington was right in urging its adoption, even while admitting that it was not entirely satisfactory. But certainly, if we intended to enter into such engagements with Great Britain, it was rank injustice to both Monroe and France to send such a man as the former to such a country as the latter.

Meanwhile Morris, instead of returning to America, was forced by his business affairs to prolong his stay

abroad for several years. During this time he journeyed at intervals through England, the Netherlands, Germany, Prussia, and Austria. His European reputation was well established, and he was everywhere received gladly into the most distinguished society of the time. What made him especially welcome was his having now definitely taken sides with the antirevolutionists in the great conflict of arms and opinions then raging through Europe; and his brilliancy, the boldness with which he had behaved as minister during the terror, and the reputation given him by the French *émigrés*, all joined to cause him to be hailed with pleasure by the aristocratic party. It is really curious to see the consideration with which he was everywhere treated, although again a mere private individual, and the terms of intimacy on which he was admitted into the most exclusive social and diplomatic circles at the various courts. He thus became an intimate friend of many of the foremost people of the period. His political observation, however, became less trustworthy than heretofore; for he was undoubtedly soured by his removal, and the excesses of the revolutionists had excited such horror in his mind as to make him no longer an impartial judge. His forecasts and judgments on the military situation in particular, although occasionally right, were usually very wild. He fully appreciated Napoleon's utter unscrupulousness and marvellous mendacity; but to the end of his life he remained unwilling to do justice to the emperor's still more remarkable warlike genius, going so far, after the final Russian campaign, as to speak of old Kutusoff as his equal. Indeed, in spite of one or two exceptions—notably his predicting almost the exact date of the retreat from Moscow—his criticisms on Napoleon's military operations do not usually stand

much above the rather ludicrous level recently reached by Count Tolstoï.

Morris was relieved by Monroe in August, 1794, and left Paris for Switzerland in October. He stopped at Coppet and spent a day with Madame de Staël, where there was a little French society that lived at her expense and was as gay as circumstances would permit. He had never been particularly impressed with the much-vaunted society of the salon, and this small survival thereof certainly had no overpowering attraction for him, if we may judge by the entry in his diary: "The road to her house is uphill and execrable, and I think I shall not again go thither." Mankind was still blind to the grand beauty of the Alps—it must be remembered that the admiration of mountain scenery is, to the shame of our forefathers be it said, almost a growth of the present century—and Morris took more interest in the Swiss population than in their surroundings. He wrote that in Switzerland the spirit of commerce had brought about a baseness of morals which nothing could cure but the same spirit carried still farther: "It teaches eventually fair-dealing as the most profitable dealing. The first lesson of trade is, My son, get money. The second is, My son, get money, honestly if you can, but get money. The third is, My son, get money; but honestly, if you would get much money."

He went to Great Britain in the following summer, and spent a year there. At one time he visited the North, staying with the Dukes of Argyle, Atholl, and Montrose, and was very much pleased with Scotland, where everything he saw convinced him that the country was certain of a rapid and vigorous growth. On his return he stopped with the Bishop of Landaff, at Col-

gate Park. The bishop announced that he was a stanch opposition man, and a firm Whig; to which statement Morris adds in his diary: "Let this be as it will, he is certainly a good landlord and a man of genius."

But Morris was now a favored guest in ministerial, even more than in opposition circles; he was considered to belong to what the czar afterward christened the "parti sain de l'Europe." He saw a good deal of both Pitt and Grenville, and was consulted by them not only about American but also about European affairs; and a number of favors which he asked for some of his friends among the *émigrés* were granted. All his visits were not on business, however; as, for instance, on July 14: "Dine at Mr. Pitt's. We sit down at six. Lords Grenville, Chatham, and another come later. The rule is established for six precisely, which is right, I think. The wines are good and the conversation flippant." Morris helped Grenville in a number of ways, at the Prussian court, for instance; and was even induced by him to write a letter to Washington, attempting to put the English attitude toward us in a good light. Washington, however, was no more to be carried off his feet in favor of the English than against them; and the facts he brought out in his reply showed that Morris had rather lost his poise, and had been hurried into an action that was ill-advised. He was quite often at court; and relates a conversation with the king, wherein that monarch's language seems to have been much such as tradition assigns him—short, abrupt sentences, repetitions, and the frequent use of "what."

He also saw a good deal of the royalist refugees. Some of them he liked and was intimate with; but the majority disgusted him and made him utterly impatient with their rancorous folly. He commented on the

strange levity and wild negotiations of the Count d'Artois, and prophesied that his character was such as to make his projected attempt on La Vendée hopeless from the start. Another day he was at the Marquis de Spinola's: "The conversation here, where our company consists of aristocrats of the first feather, turns on French affairs. They, at first, agree that union among the French is necessary. But when they come to particulars, they fly off and are mad. Madame Spinola would send the Duke of Orleans to Siberia. An abbé, a young man, talks much and loud, to show his *esprit;* and to hear them one would suppose they were quite at their ease in a *petit souper de Paris.*" Of that ponderous exile, the chief of the house of Bourbon, and afterward Louis XVIII, he said that, in his opinion, he had nothing to do but to try to get shot, thereby redeeming by valor the foregone follies of his conduct.

In June, 1796, Morris returned to the Continent, and started on another tour, in his own carriage; having spent some time himself in breaking in his young and restive horses to their task. He visited all the different capitals, at one time or another; among them, Berlin, where, as usual, he was very well received. For all his horror of Jacobinism, Morris was a thorough American, perfectly independent, without a particle of the snob in his disposition, and valuing his acquaintances for what they were, not for their titles. In his diary he puts down the Queen of England as "a well-bred, sensible woman," and the Empress of Austria as "a good sort of little woman," and contemptuously dismisses the Prussian king with a word, precisely as he does with any one else. One of the entries in his journal, while he was staying in Berlin, offers a case in point. "July 23, I dine, very much against my will, with Prince

Ferdinand. I was engaged to a very agreeable party, but it seems the highnesses must never be denied, unless it be from indisposition. I had, however, written a note declining the intended honor; but the messenger, upon looking at it, for it was a letter patent, like the invitation, said he could not deliver it; that nobody ever refused; all of which I was informed of after he was gone. On consulting I found that I must go or give mortal offense, which last I have no inclination to do; so I write another note, and send out to hunt up the messenger. While I am abroad this untoward incident is arranged, and of course I am at Bellevue." While at court on one occasion he met, and took a great fancy to, the daughter of the famous Baroness Riedesel; having been born in the United States, she had been christened America.

In one of his conversations with the king, who was timid and hesitating, Morris told him that the Austrians would be all right if he would only lend them some Prussian generals—a remark upon which Jena and Auerstadt later on offered a curious commentary. He became very impatient with the king's inability to make up his mind; and wrote to the Duchess of Cumberland that "the guardian angel of the French Republic kept him lingering on this side of the grave." He wrote to Lord Grenville that Prussia was "seeking little things by little means," and that the war with Poland was popular "because the moral principles of a Prussian go to the possession of whatever he can acquire. And so little is he the slave of what he calls vulgar prejudice, that, give him opportunity and means, and he will spare you the trouble of finding a pretext. This liberality of sentiment greatly facilitates negotiation, for it is not necessary to clothe propositions in honest

and decent forms." Morris was a most startling phenomenon to the diplomatists of the day, trampling with utter disregard on all their hereditary theories of finesse and cautious duplicity. The timid formalists, and more especially those who considered double-dealing as the legitimate, and in fact the only legitimate, weapon of their trade, were displeased with him; but he was very highly thought of by such as could see the strength and originality of the views set forth in his frank, rather overbold language.

At Dresden he notes that he was late on the day set down for his presentation at court, owing to his valet having translated *halb zwölf* as half past twelve. The Dresden picture-galleries were the first that drew from him any very strong expressions of admiration. In the city were numbers of the *émigrés*, fleeing from their countrymen, and only permitted to stop in Saxony for a few days; yet they were serene and gay, and spent their time in busy sightseeing, examining everything curious which they could get at. Morris had become pretty well accustomed to the way in which they met fate; but such lively resignation surprised even him, and he remarked that so great a calamity had never lighted on shoulders so well fitted to bear it.

At Vienna he made a long stay, not leaving it until January, 1797. Here, as usual, he fraternized at once with the various diplomatists; the English ambassador, Sir Morton Eden, in particular, going out of his way to show him every attention. The Austrian prime minister, M. Thugut, was also very polite; and so were the foreign ministers of all the powers. He was soon at home in the upper social circles of this German Paris; but from the entries in his journal it is evident that he thought very little of Viennese society. He liked talk-

ing and the company of brilliant conversationalists, and he abominated gambling; but in Vienna every one was so devoted to play that there was no conversation at all. He considered a dumb circle round a card-table as the dullest society in the world, and in Vienna there was little else. Nor was he impressed with the ability of the statesmen he met. He thought the Austrian nobles to be on the decline; they stood for the dying feudal system. The great families had been squandering their riches with the most reckless extravagance, and were becoming broken and impoverished; and the imperial government was glad to see the humiliation of the haughty nobles, not perceiving that, if preserved, they would act as a buffer between it and the new power beginning to make itself felt throughout Europe, and would save the throne if not from total overthrow, at least from shocks so fierce as greatly to weaken it.

Morris considered Prince Esterhazy as an archtypical representative of the class. He was captain of the noble Hungarian Guard, a small body of tall, handsome men on fiery steeds, magnificently caparisoned. The prince, as its commander, wore a Hungarian dress, scarlet, with fur cape and cuffs, and yellow morocco boots; everything embroidered with pearls, four hundred and seventy large ones, and many thousand small, but all put on in good taste. He had a collar of large diamonds, a plume of diamonds in his cap; and his sword-hilt, scabbard, and spurs were inlaid with the same precious stones. His horse was equally bejewelled; steed and rider, with their trappings, "were estimated at a value of a quarter of a million dollars." Old Blücher would surely have considered the pair "very fine plunder."

The prince was reported to be nominally the richest subject in Europe, with a revenue that during the Turk-

ish war went up to a million guilders annually; yet he was hopelessly in debt already, and getting deeper every year. He lived in great magnificence, but was by no means noted for lavish hospitality; all his extravagance was reserved for himself, especially for purposes of display. His Vienna stable contained a hundred and fifty horses; and during a six weeks' residence in Frankfort, where he was ambassador at the time of an imperial coronation, he spent eighty thousand pounds. Altogether, an outsider may be pardoned for not at first seeing precisely what useful function such a merely gorgeous being performed in the body politic; yet when summoned before the bar of the new world-forces, Esterhazy and his kind showed that birds of such fine feathers sometimes had beaks and talons as well, and knew how to use them, the craven flight of the French noblesse to the contrary notwithstanding.

Morris was often at court, where the constant theme of conversation was naturally the struggle with the French armies under Moreau and Bonaparte. After one of these mornings he mentions: "The levee was oddly arranged, all the males being in one apartment, through which the emperor passes in going to chapel, and returns the same way with the empress and imperial family; after which they go through their own rooms to the ladies assembled on the other side."

The English members of the *corps diplomatique* in all the European capitals were especially civil to him; and he liked them more than their Continental brethren. But for some of their young tourist countrymen he cared less; and it is curious to see that the ridicule to which Americans have rightly exposed themselves by their absurd fondness for uniforms and for assuming military titles to which they have no warrant, was no

less deservedly earned by the English at the end of the last century. One of Morris's friends, Baron Groshlaer, being, like the other Viennese, curious to know the object of his stay—they guessed aright that he wished to get Lafayette liberated—at last almost asked him outright about it. "Finally I tell him that the only difference between me and the young Englishmen, of whom there is a swarm here, is, that I seek instruction with gray hairs and they with brown. . . . At the archduchess's one of the little princes, brother to the emperor, and who is truly an *arch*duke, asks me to explain to him the different uniforms worn by the young English, of whom there are a great number here, all in regimentals. Some of these belong to no corps at all, and the others to yeomanry, fencibles and the like, all of which purport to be raised for the defense of their country in case she should be invaded; but now, when the invasion seems most imminent, they are abroad, and cannot be made to feel the ridiculous indecency of appearing in regimentals. Sir M. Eden and others have given them the broadest hints without the least effect. One of them told me that all the world should not laugh him out of his regimentals. I bowed. . . . I tell the prince that I really am not able to answer his question, but that, in general, their dresses I believe are worn for convenience in travelling. He smiles at this. . . . If I were an Englishman I should be hurt at these exhibitions, and as it is I am sorry for them. . . . I find that here they assume it as unquestionable that the young men of England have a right to adjust the ceremonial of Vienna. The political relations of the two countries induce the good company here to treat them with politeness; but nothing prevents their being laughed at, as I found the other evening at Madame de Groshlaer's,

where the young women as well as the girls were very merry at the expense of these young men."

After leaving Vienna he again passed through Berlin, and in a conversation with the king he foreshadowed curiously the state of politics a century later, and showed that he thoroughly appreciated the cause that would in the end reconcile the traditional enmity of the Hohenzollerns and Hapsburgs. "After some trifling things I tell him that I have just seen his best friend. He asks who? and, to his great surprise, I reply, the emperor. He speaks of him well personally, and I observe that he is a very honest young man, to which his majesty replies by asking, 'Mais, que pensez vous de Thugut.' 'Quant à cela, c'est une autre affaire, sire.' I had stated the interest, which makes him and the emperor good friends, to be their mutual apprehensions from Russia. 'But suppose we all three unite?' 'Ce sera un diable de fricassée, sire, si vous vous mettez tous les trois à casser les œufs.'"

At Brunswick he was received with great hospitality, the duke, and particularly the duchess dowager, the King of England's sister, treating him very hospitably. He here saw General Riedesel, with whom he was most friendly; the general in the course of conversation inveighed bitterly against Burgoyne. He went to Munich also, where he was received on a very intimate footing by Count Rumford, then the great power in Bavaria, who was busily engaged in doing all he could to better the condition of his country. Morris was much interested in his reforms. They were certainly needed; the count told his friend that on assuming the reins of power the abuses to be remedied were beyond belief—for instance, there was one regiment of cavalry that had five field-officers and only three horses. With some of

the friends that Morris made—such as the Duchess of Cumberland, the Princess de la Tour et Taxis, and others—he corresponded until the end of his life.

While at Vienna he again did all he could to get Lafayette released from prison, where his wife was confined with him; but in vain. Madame de Lafayette's sister, the Marquise de Montagu, and Madame de Staël both wrote him the most urgent appeals to do what he could for the prisoners; the former writing, "My sister is in danger of losing the life you saved in the prisons of Paris . . . has not he whom Europe numbers among those citizens of whom North America ought to be most proud, has not he the right to make himself heard in favor of a citizen of the United States, and of a wife, whose life belongs to him, since he has preserved it?" Madame de Staël felt the most genuine grief for Lafayette, and very sincere respect for Morris; and in her letters to the latter she displayed both sentiments with a lavish exaggeration that hardly seems in good taste. If Morris had needed a spur the letters would have supplied it; but the task was an impossible one, and Lafayette was not released until the peace in 1797, when he was turned over to the American consul at Hamburg, in Morris's presence.

Morris was able to render more effectual help to an individual far less worthy of it than Lafayette. This was the then Duke of Orleans, afterward King Louis Philippe, who had fled from France with Dumouriez. Morris's old friend, Madame de Flahaut, appealed to him almost hysterically on the duke's behalf; and he at once did even more than she requested, giving the duke money wherewith to go to America, and also furnishing him with unlimited credit at his own New York banker's, during his wanderings in the United States.

This was done for the sake of the Duchess of Orleans, to whom Morris was devotedly attached, not for the sake of the duke himself. The latter knew this perfectly, writing: "Your kindness is a blessing I owe to my mother and to our friend" (Madame de Flahaut). The bourgeois king admirably represented the meanest, smallest side of the bourgeois character; he was not a bad man, but he was a very petty and contemptible one; had he been born in a different station of life, he would have been just the individual to take a prominent part in local temperance meetings, while he sanded the sugar he sold in his corner grocery. His treatment of Morris's loan was characteristic. When he came into his rights again, at the Restoration, he at first appeared to forget his debt entirely, and when his memory was jogged, he merely sent Morris the original sum, without a word of thanks; whereupon Morris, rather nettled, and as prompt to stand up for his rights against a man in prosperity as he had been to help him when in adversity, put the matter in the hands of his lawyer, through whom he notified Louis Philippe that if the affair was to be treated on a merely business basis, it should then be treated in a strictly business way, and the interest for the twenty years that had gone by should be forwarded also. This was accordingly done, although not until after Morris's death, the entire sum refunded being seventy thousand francs.

Morris brought his complicated business affairs in Europe to a close in 1798, and sailed from Hamburg on October 4 of that year, reaching New York after an exceedingly tedious and disagreeable voyage of eighty days.

CHAPTER XII

SERVICE IN THE UNITED STATES SENATE

Morris was very warmly greeted on his return; and it was evident that the length of his stay abroad had in nowise made him lose ground with his friends at home. His natural affiliations were all with the Federalist party, which he immediately joined.

During the year 1799 he did not take much part in politics, as he was occupied in getting his business affairs in order and in putting to rights his estates at Morrisania. The old manor-house had become such a crazy, leaky affair that he tore it down and built a new one; a great, roomy building, not in the least showy, but solid, comfortable, and in perfect taste; having, across the tree-clad hills of Westchester, a superb view of the Sound, with its jagged coast and capes and islands.

Although it was so long since he had practised law, he was shortly engaged in a very important case that was argued for eight days before the Court of Errors in Albany. Few trials in the State of New York have ever brought together such a number of men of remarkable legal ability; for among the lawyers engaged on one side or the other were Morris, Hamilton, Burr, Robert Livingston, and Troup. There were some sharp passages of arms: and the trial of wits between Morris and Hamilton in particular was so keen as to cause a passing coolness.

During the ten years that had gone by since Morris sailed for Europe, the control of the national government had been in the hands of the Federalists; when he

returned, party bitterness was at the highest pitch, for the Democrats were preparing to make the final push for power which should overthrow and ruin their antagonists. Four-fifths of the talent, ability, and good sense of the country were to be found in the Federalist ranks; for the Federalists had held their own so far, by sheer force of courage and intellectual vigor, over foes in reality more numerous. Their great prop had been Washington. His colossal influence was to the end decisive in party contests, and he had in fact, although hardly in name, almost entirely abandoned his early attempts at non-partisanship, had grown to distrust Madison as he long before had distrusted Jefferson, and had come into constantly closer relations with their enemies. His death diminished greatly the chances of Federalist success; there were two other causes at work that destroyed them entirely.

One of these was the very presence in the dominant party of so many men nearly equal in strong will and great intellectual power; their ambitions and theories clashed; even the loftiness of their aims, and their disdain of everything small, made them poor politicians, and with Washington out of the way there was no one commander to overawe the rest and to keep down the fierce bickerings constantly arising among them; while in the other party there was a single leader, Jefferson, absolutely without a rival, but supported by a host of sharp political workers, most skilful in marshalling that unwieldy and hitherto disunited host of voters who were inferior in intelligence to their fellows.

The second cause lay deep in the nature of the Federalist organization: it was its distrust of the people. This was the fatally weak streak in Federalism. In a government such as ours it was a foregone conclusion

that a party which did not believe in the people would sooner or later be thrown from power unless there was an armed break-up of the system. The distrust was felt, and of course excited corresponding and intense hostility. Had the Federalists been united, and had they freely trusted in the people, the latter would have shown that the trust was well founded; but there was no hope for leaders who suspected each other and feared their followers.

Morris landed just as the Federalist reaction, brought about by the conduct of France, had spent itself—thanks partly to some inopportune pieces of insolence from England, in which country, as Morris once wrote to a foreign friend, "on a toujours le bon esprit de vouloir prendre les mouches avec du vinaigre." The famous Alien and Sedition laws were exciting great disgust, and in Virginia and Kentucky Jefferson was using them as handles wherewith to guide seditious agitation—not that he believed in sedition, but because he considered it good party policy, for the moment, to excite it. The parties hated each other with rancorous virulence; the newspapers teemed with the foulest abuse of public men, accusations of financial dishonesty were rife, Washington himself not being spared, and the most scurrilous personalities were bandied about between the different editors. The Federalists were split into two factions, one following the President, Adams, in his efforts to keep peace with France, if it could be done with honor, while the others, under Hamilton's lead, wished war at once.

Pennsylvanian politics were already very low. The leaders who had taken control were men of mean capacity and small morality, and the State was not only becoming rapidly democratic but was also drifting along

in a disorganized, pseudojacobinical, half-insurrectionary kind of way that would have boded ill for its future had it not been fettered by the presence of healthier communities round about it. New England was the only part of the community, excepting Delaware, where Federalism was on a perfectly sound footing; for in that section there was no caste spirit, the leaders and their followers were thoroughly in touch, and all the citizens, shrewd, thrifty, independent, were used to self-government and fully awake to the fact that honesty and order are the prerequisites of liberty. Yet even here democracy had made some inroads.

South of the Potomac the Federalists had lost ground rapidly. Virginia was still a battle-field; as long as Washington lived, his tremendous personal influence acted as a brake on the democratic advance, and the State's greatest orator, Patrick Henry, had halted beside the grave to denounce the seditious schemes of the disunion agitators with the same burning, thrilling eloquence that, thirty years before, had stirred to their depths the hearts of his hearers when he bade defiance to the tyrannous might of the British king. But when these two men were dead, Marshall—though destined, as chief and controlling influence in the third division of our governmental system, to mould the whole of that system on the lines of Federalist thought and to prove that a sound judiciary could largely affect an unsound executive and legislature—even Marshall could not, single-handed, stem the current that had gradually gathered head. Virginia stands easily first among all our commonwealths for the statesmen and warriors she has brought forth; and it is noteworthy that during the long contest between the nationalists and separatists, which forms the central fact in our history for the first

three-quarters of a century of our national life, she gave leaders to both sides at the two great crises: Washington and Marshall to the one, and Jefferson to the other, when the question was one of opinion as to whether the Union should be built up; and when the appeal to arms was made to tear it down, Farragut and Thomas to the North, Lee and Jackson to the South.

There was one eddy in the tide of Democratic success that flowed so strongly to the southward. This was in South Carolina. The fierce little Palmetto State has always been a free-lance among her Southern sisters; for instance, though usually ultrademocratic, she was hostile to the two great Democratic chiefs, Jefferson and Jackson, though both were from the South. At the time that Morris came home, the brilliant little group of Federalist leaders within her bounds, headed by men of national renown like Pinckney and Harper, kept her true to Federalism by downright force of intellect and integrity; for they were among the purest as well as the ablest statesmen of the day.

New York had been going through a series of bitter party contests; any one examining a file of papers of that day will come to the conclusion that party spirit was even more violent and unreasonable then than now. The two great Federalist leaders, Hamilton and Jay, stood head and shoulders above all their Democratic competitors, and they were backed by the best men in the State, like Rufus King, Schuyler, and others. But, though as orators and statesmen they had no rivals, they were very deficient in the arts of political management. Hamilton's imperious haughtiness had alienated the powerful family of the Livingstons, who had thrown in their lot with the Clintonians; and a still more valuable ally to the latter had arisen in that consummate

master of "machine" politics, Aaron Burr. In 1792, Jay, then chief justice of the United States, had run for governor against Clinton, and had received the majority of the votes; but had been counted out by the returning board in spite of the protest of its four Federalist members—Gansevoort, Roosevelt, Jones, and Sands. The indignation was extreme, and only Jay's patriotism and good sense prevented an outbreak. However, the memory of the fraud remained fresh in the minds of the citizens, and at the next election for governor he was chosen by a heavy majority, having then just come back from his mission to England. Soon afterward his treaty was published, and excited a whirlwind of indignation; it was only ratified in the Senate through Washington's great influence, backed by the magnificent oratory of Fisher Ames, whose speech on this occasion, when he was almost literally on his death-bed, ranks among the half-dozen greatest of our country. The treaty was very objectionable in certain points, but it was most necessary to our well-being, and Jay was probably the only American who could have negotiated it. As with the Ashburton treaty many years later, extreme sections in England attacked it as fiercely as did the extreme sections here; and Lord Sheffield voiced their feelings when he hailed the War of 1812 as offering a chance to England to get back the advantages out of which "Jay had duped Grenville."

But the clash with France shortly afterward swept away the recollection of the treaty, and Jay was re-elected in 1798. One of the arguments, by the way, which was used against him in the canvass was that he was an Abolitionist. But, in spite of his re-election, the New York Democrats were steadily gaining ground.

Such was the situation when Morris returned. He

at once took high rank among the Federalists, and in April, 1800, just before the final wreck of their party, was chosen by them to fill an unexpired term of three years in the United States Senate. Before this he had made it evident that his sympathies lay with Hamilton and those who did not think highly of Adams. He did not deem it wise to renominate the latter for the presidency. He had even written to Washington, earnestly beseeching him to accept the nomination; but Washington died a day or two after the letter was sent. In spite of the jarring between the leaders, the Federalists nominated Adams and Pinckney. In the ensuing presidential election many of the party chiefs, notably Marshall, of Virginia, already a strong Adams man, faithfully stood by the ticket in its entirety; but Hamilton, Morris, and many others at the North probably hoped in their hearts that, by the aid of the curious electoral system which then existed, some chance would put the great Carolinian in the first place and make him President. Indeed, there is little question that this might have been done, had not Pinckney, one of the most high-minded and disinterested statesmen we have ever had, emphatically declined to profit in any way by the hurting of the grim old Puritan.

The house thus divided against itself naturally fell, and Jefferson was chosen President. It was in New York that the decisive struggle took place, for that was the pivotal State; and there the Democrats, under the lead of the Livingstons and Clintons, but above all by the masterly political manœuvres of Aaron Burr, gained a crushing victory. Hamilton, stung to madness by the defeat, and sincerely believing that the success of his opponents would be fatal to the Republic—for the two parties hated each other with a blind fury unknown to

the organizations of the present day—actually proposed to Jay, the governor, to nullify the action of the people by the aid of the old legislature, a Federalist body, which was still holding over, although the members of its successor had been chosen. Jay, as pure as he was brave, refused to sanction any such scheme of unworthy partisanship. It is worth noting that the victors in this election introduced for the first time the "spoils system," in all its rigor, into our State affairs; imitating the bad example of Pennsylvania a year or two previously.

When the Federalists in Congress, into which body the choice for President had been thrown, took up Burr, as a less objectionable alternative than Jefferson, Morris, much to his credit, openly and heartily disapproved of the movement, and was sincerely glad that it failed. For he thought Burr far the more dangerous man of the two, and, moreover, did not believe that the evident intention of the people should be thwarted. Both he and Hamilton, on this occasion, acted more wisely and more honestly than did most of their heated fellow partisans. Writing to the latter, the former remarked: "It is dangerous to be impartial in politics; you, who are temperate in drinking, have never perhaps noticed the awkward situation of a man who continues sober after the company are drunk."

Morris joined the Senate at Philadelphia in May, 1800, but it almost immediately adjourned, to meet at Washington in November, when he was again present. Washington, as it then was, was a place whose straggling squalor has often been described. Morris wrote to the Princess de la Tour et Taxis that it needed nothing "but houses, cellars, kitchens, well-informed men, amiable women, and other little trifles of the kind to

make the city perfect"; that it was "the very best city in the world for a future residence," but that as he was "not one of those good people whom we call posterity," he would meanwhile like to live somewhere else.

During his three years' term in the Senate he was one of the strong pillars of the Federalist party; but he was both too independent and too erratic to act always within strict party lines, and while he was an ultra-Federalist on some points, he openly abandoned his fellows on others. He despised Jefferson as a tricky and incapable theorist, skilful in getting votes, but in nothing else; a man who believed "in the wisdom of mobs, and the moderation of Jacobins," and who found himself "in the wretched plight of being forced to turn out good officers to make room for the unworthy."

After the election that turned them out of power, but just before their opponents took office, the Federalists in the Senate and House passed the famous judiciary bill, and Adams signed it. It provided for a number of new federal judges to act throughout the States, while the Supreme Court was retained as the ultimate court of decision. It was an excellent measure, inasmuch as it simplified the work of the judiciary, saved the highest branch from useless travelling, prevented the calendars from being choked with work, and supplied an upright federal judiciary to certain districts where the local judges could not be depended upon to act honestly. On the other hand, the Federalists employed it as a means to keep themselves partly in power, after the nation had decided that they should be turned out. Although the Democrats had bitterly opposed it, yet if, as was only right, the offices created by it had been left vacant until Jefferson came in, it would probably have been allowed to stand. But Adams, most improperly,

spent the last hours of his administration in putting in the new judges.

Morris, who heartily championed the measure, wrote his reasons for so doing to Livingston; giving, with his usual frankness, those that were political and improper, as well as those based on some public policy, but apparently not appreciating the gravity of the charges he so lightly admitted. He said: "The new judiciary bill may have, and doubtless has, many little faults, but it answers the double purpose of bringing justice near to men's doors, and of giving additional fibre to the root of government. You must not, my friend, judge of other States by your own. Depend on it, that in some parts of this Union justice cannot be readily obtained in the state courts." So far, he was all right, and the truth of his statements, and the soundness of his reasons, could not be challenged as to the propriety of the law itself; but he was much less happy in giving his views of the way in which it would be carried out: "That the leaders of the federal party may use this opportunity to provide for friends and adherents is, I think, probable; and if they were my enemies, I should blame them for it. Whether I should do the same thing myself is another question. . . . They are about to experience a heavy gale of adverse wind; can they be blamed for casting many anchors to hold their ship through the storm?" Most certainly they should be blamed for casting this particular kind of anchor; it was a very gross outrage for them to "provide for friends and adherents" in such a manner.

The folly of their action was seen at once; for they had so maddened the Democrats that the latter repealed the act as soon as they came into power. This also was of course all wrong, and was a simple sacrifice

of a measure of good government to partisan rage. Morris led the fight against it, deeming the repeal not only in the highest degree unwise but also unconstitutional. After the repeal was accomplished, the knowledge that their greed to grasp office under the act was probably the cause of the loss of an excellent law must have been rather a bitter cud for the Federalists to chew. Morris always took an exaggerated view of the repeal, regarding it as a death-blow to the Constitution. It was certainly a most unfortunate affair throughout; and much of the blame attaches to the Federalists, although still more to their antagonists.

The absolute terror with which even moderate Federalists had viewed the victory of the Democrats was in a certain sense justifiable; for the leaders who led the Democrats to triumph were the very men who had fought tooth and nail against every measure necessary to make us a free, orderly, and powerful nation. But the safety of the nation really lay in the very fact that the policy hitherto advocated by the now victorious party had embodied principles so wholly absurd in practice that it was out of the question to apply them at all to the actual running of the government. Jefferson could write or speak—and could feel too—the most high-sounding sentiments; but once it came to actions he was absolutely at sea, and on almost every matter —especially where he did well—he had to fall back on the Federalist theories. Almost the only important point on which he allowed himself free scope was that of the national defenses; and here, particularly as regards the navy, he worked very serious harm to the country. Otherwise he generally adopted and acted on the views of his predecessors; as Morris said, the Democrats "did more to strengthen the executive than Fed-

eralists dared think of, even in Washington's day." As a consequence, though the nation would certainly have been better off if men like Adams or Pinckney had been retained at the head of affairs, yet the change resulted in far less harm than it bade fair to.

On the other hand the Federalists cut a very sorry figure in opposition. We have never had another party so little able to stand adversity. They lost their temper first and they lost their principles next, and actually began to take up the heresies discarded by their adversaries. Morris himself, untrue to all his previous record, advanced various States'-rights doctrines; and the Federalists, the men who had created the Union, ended their days under the grave suspicion of having desired to break it up. Morris even opposed, and on a close vote temporarily defeated, the perfectly unobjectionable proposition to change the electoral system by designating the candidates for President and Vice-President; the reason he gave was that he believed parties should be forced to nominate both of their best men, and that he regarded the Jefferson-Burr tie as a beautiful object-lesson for teaching this point!

On one most important question, however, he cut loose from his party, who were entirely in the wrong, and acted with the administration, who were behaving in strict accordance with Federalist precepts. This was in reference to the treaty by which we acquired Louisiana.

While in opposition, one of the most discreditable features of the Republican-Democratic party had been its servile truckling to France, which at times drove it into open disloyalty to America. Indeed this subservience to foreigners was a feature of our early party history; and the most confirmed pessimist must admit

that, as regards patriotism and indignant intolerance of foreign control, the party organizations of to-day are immeasurably superior to those of eighty or ninety years back. But it was only while in opposition that either party was ready to throw itself into the arms of outsiders. Once the Democrats took the reins they immediately changed their attitude. The West demanded New Orleans and the valley of the Mississippi; and what it demanded it was determined to get. When we only had the decaying weakness of Spain to deal with, there was no cause for hurry; but when Louisiana was ceded to France, at the time when the empire of Napoleon was a match for all the rest of the world put together, the country was up in arms at once.

The administration promptly began to negotiate for the purchase of Louisiana. Morris backed them up heartily, thus splitting off from the bulk of the Federalists, and earnestly advocated far stronger measures than had been taken. He believed that so soon as the French should establish themselves in New Orleans we should have a war with them; he knew it would be impossible for the haughty chiefs of a military despotism long to avoid collisions with the reckless and warlike backwoodsmen of the border. Nor would he have been sorry had such a war taken place. He said that it was a necessity to us, for we were dwindling into a race of mere speculators and drivelling philosophers, whereas ten years of warfare would bring forth a crop of heroes and statesmen, fit timber out of which to hew an empire.

Almost his last act in the United States Senate was to make a most powerful and telling speech in favor of at once occupying the territory in dispute, and bidding defiance to Napoleon. He showed that we could not

submit to having so dangerous a neighbor as France, an ambitious and conquering nation, at whose head was the greatest warrior of the age. With ringing emphasis he claimed the Western regions as peculiarly our heritage, as the property of the fathers of America which they held in trust for their children. It was true that France was then enjoying the peace which she had wrung from the gathered armies of all Europe; yet he advised us to fling down the gantlet fearlessly, not hampering ourselves by an attempt at alliance with Great Britain or any other power, but resting confident that, if America was heartily in earnest, she would be able to hold her own in any struggle. The cost of the conquest he brushed contemptuously aside; he considered "that counting-house policy, which sees nothing but money, a poor, short-sighted, half-witted, mean, and miserable thing, as far removed from wisdom as is a monkey from a man." He wished for peace; but he did not believe the emperor would yield us the territory, and he knew that his fellow representatives, and practically all the American people, were determined to fight for it if they could get it in no other way; therefore he advised them to begin at once, and gain forthwith what they wanted, and perhaps their example would inspirit Europe to rise against the tyrant.

It was bold advice, and if need had arisen it would have been followed; for we were bound to have Louisiana, if not by bargain and sale then by fair shock of arms. But Napoleon yielded, and gave us the land for fifteen millions, of which, said Morris: "I am content to pay my share to deprive foreigners of all pretext for entering our interior country; if nothing else were gained by the treaty, that alone would satisfy me."

Morris's term as senator expired on March 4, 1803,

and he was not re-elected; for New York State had passed into the hands of the Democrats. But he still continued to play a prominent part in public affairs, for he was the leader in starting the project of the Erie Canal. It was to him that we owe the original idea of this great waterway, for he thought of it and planned it out long before any one else. He had publicly proposed it during the Revolutionary period; in 1803 he began the agitation in its favor that culminated in its realization, and he was chairman of the canal commissioners from the time of their appointment, in 1810, until within a few months of his death. The three first reports of the commission were all from his pen. As Stephen Van Rensselaer, himself one of the commissioners from the beginning, said: "Gouverneur Morris was the father of our great canal." He hoped ultimately to make it a ship canal. While a member of the commission, he not only discharged his duties as such with characteristic energy and painstaking, but he also did most effective outside work in advancing the enterprise, while he mastered the subject more thoroughly in all its details than did any other man.

He spent most of his time at Morrisania, but travelled for two or three months every summer, sometimes going out to the then "far West," along the shores of Lakes Erie and Ontario, and once descending the St. Lawrence. At home he spent his time tilling his farm, reading, receiving visits from his friends, and carrying on a wide correspondence on business and politics. Jay's home was within driving distance, and the two fine old fellows saw much of each other. On the 25th of December, 1809, Morris, then fifty-six years old, married Miss Anne Cary Randolph, a member of the famous Virginia family; he was very happy with her, and by her

he had one son. Three weeks after the marriage he wrote Jay a pressing request to visit him: "I pray you will, with your daughters, embark immediately in your sleigh, after a very early breakfast, and push on so as to reach this house in the evening. My wife sends her love, and says she longs to receive her husband's friend; that his sickness must be no excuse, for she will nurse him. Come, then, and see your old friend perform his part in an old-fashioned scene of domestic enjoyment." Jay was very simple in his way of living; but Morris was rather formal. When he visited his friend he always came with his valet, was shown straight to his room without seeing any one, dressed himself with scrupulous nicety—being very particular about his powdered hair—and then came down to see his host.

Although his letters generally dealt with public matters, he sometimes went into home details. He thus wrote an amusing letter to a good friend of his, a lady, who was desirous, following the custom of the day, to send her boy to what was called a "college" at an absurdly early age; he closed by warning her that "these children of eleven, after a four years' course, in which they may learn to smatter a little of everything, become bachelors of arts before they know how to button their clothes, and are the most troublesome and useless, sometimes the most pernicious, little animals that ever infested a commonwealth."

At one time he received as his guest Moreau, the exiled French general, then seeking service in the United States. Writing in his diary an account of the visit, he says: "In the course of our conversation, touching very gently the idea of his serving (in case of necessity) against France, he declares frankly that, when the occasion arrives, he shall feel no reluctance; that France

having cast him out, he is a citizen of the country where he lives, and has the same right to follow his trade here as any other man."

He took the keenest pleasure in his life, and always insisted that America was the pleasantest of all places in which to live. Writing to a friend abroad, and mentioning that he respected the people of Britain, but did not find them congenial, he added: "But were the manners of those countries as pleasant as the people are respectable, I should never be reconciled to their summers. Compare the uninterrupted warmth and splendor of America, from the first of May to the last of September, and her autumn, truly celestial, with your shivering June, your July and August sometimes warm but often wet, your uncertain September, your gloomy October, and your dismal November. Compare these things, and then say how a man who prizes the charm of Nature can think of making the exchange. If you were to pass one autumn with us, you would not give it for the best six months to be found in any other country. . . . There is a brilliance in our atmosphere of which you can have no idea."

He thoroughly appreciated the marvellous future that lay before the race on this continent. Writing in 1801, he says: "As yet we only crawl along the outer shell of our country. The interior excels the part we inhabit in soil, in climate, in everything. The proudest empire in Europe is but a bauble compared to what America *will* be, *must* be, in the course of two centuries, perhaps of one!" And again: "With respect to this country, calculation outruns fancy, and fact outruns calculation."

Until his hasty, impulsive temper became so soured by partisanship as to warp his judgment, Morris re-

mained as well satisfied with the people and the system of government as with the land itself. In one of his first letters after his return to America he wrote: "There is a fund of good sense and calmness of character here, which will, I think, avoid all dangerous excesses. We are free: we know it: and we know how to continue free." On another occasion, about the same time, he said: "*Nil desperandum de republica* is a sound principle." Again, in the middle of Jefferson's first term: "We have indeed a set of madmen in the administration, and they will do many foolish things; but there is a vigorous vegetative principle at the root which will make our tree flourish, let the winds blow as they may."

He at first took an equally just view of our political system, saying that in adopting a republican form of government he "not only took it, as a man does his wife, for better or worse, but, what few men do with their wives, knowing all its bad qualities." He observed that there was always a counter-current in human affairs, which opposed alike good and evil. "Thus the good we hope is seldom attained, and the evil we fear is rarely realized. The leaders of faction must for their own sakes avoid errors of enormous magnitude; so that, while the republican form lasts, we shall be fairly well governed." He thought this form the one best suited for us, and remarked that "every kind of government was liable to evil; that the best was that which had fewest faults; that the excellence even of that best depended more on its fitness for the nation where it was established than on intrinsic perfection." He denounced, with a fierce scorn that they richly merit, the despicable demagogues and witless fools who teach that in all cases the voice of the majority must be implicitly obeyed, and that public men have only to carry

out its will, and thus "acknowledge themselves the willing instruments of folly and vice. They declare that in order to please the people they will, regardless alike of what conscience may dictate or reason approve, make the profligate sacrifice of public right on the altar of private interest. What more can be asked by the sternest tyrant of the most despicable slave? Creatures of this sort are the tools which usurpers employ in building despotism."

Sounder and truer maxims never were uttered; but unfortunately the indignation naturally excited by the utter weakness and folly of Jefferson's second term, and the pitiable incompetence shown both by him, by his successor, and by their party associates in dealing with affairs, so inflamed and exasperated Morris as to make him completely lose his head, and hurried him into an opposition so violent that his follies surpassed the worst of the follies he condemned. He gradually lost faith in our republican system, and in the Union itself. His old jealousy of the West revived more strongly than ever; he actually proposed that our enormous masses of new territory, destined one day to hold the bulk of our population, "should be governed as provinces, and allowed no voice in our councils." So hopelessly futile a scheme is beneath comment; and it cannot possibly be reconciled with his previous utterances when he descanted on our future greatness as a people, and claimed the West as the heritage of our children. His conduct can only be unqualifiedly condemned; and he has but the poor palliation that, in our early history, many of the leading men in New York, and an even larger proportion in New England, felt the same narrow, illiberal jealousy of the West which had formerly been felt by the English statesmen for America as a whole.

It is well indeed for our land that we of this generation have at last learned to think nationally, and, no matter in what State we live, to view our whole country with the pride of personal possession.

CHAPTER XIII

THE NORTHERN DISUNION MOVEMENT AMONG THE FEDERALISTS

It is a painful thing to have to record that the closing act in a great statesman's career not only compares ill with what went before, but is actually to the last degree a discreditable and unworthy performance.

Morris's bitterness and anger against the government grew apace; and finally his hatred for the administration became such, that, to hurt it, he was willing also to do irreparable harm to the nation itself. He violently opposed the various embargo acts, and all the other governmental measures of the decade before the war; and worked himself up to such a pitch, when hostilities began, that, though one of the founders of the Constitution, though formerly one of the chief exponents of the national idea, and though once a main upholder of the Union, he abandoned every patriotic principle and became an ardent advocate of Northern secession.

To any reasoning student of American history it goes without saying that there was very good cause for his anger with the administration. From the time the House of Virginia came into power, until the beginning of Monroe's administration, there was a distinctly anti-New England feeling at Washington, and much of the legislation bore especially heavily on the Northeast. Excepting Jefferson, we have never produced an Executive more helpless than Madison, when it came to grappling with real dangers and difficulties. Like his

predecessor, he was only fit to be President in a time of profound peace; he was utterly out of place the instant matters grew turbulent, or difficult problems arose to be solved, and he was a ridiculously incompetent leader for a war with Great Britain. He was entirely too timid to have embarked on such a venture of his own accord, and was simply forced into it by the threat of losing his second term. The fiery young Democrats of the South and West, and their brothers of the Middle States, were the authors of the war; they themselves, for all their bluster, were but one shade less incompetent than their nominal chief, when it came to actual work, and were shamefully unable to make their words good by deeds.

The administration thus drifted into a war which it had neither the wisdom to avoid, nor the forethought to prepare for. In view of the fact that the war was their own, it is impossible to condemn sufficiently strongly the incredible folly of the Democrats in having all along refused to build a navy or provide any other adequate means of defense. In accordance with their curiously foolish theories, they persisted in relying on that weakest of all weak reeds, the militia, who promptly ran away every time they faced a foe in the open. This applied to all, whether Eastern, Western, or Southern; the men of the Northern States in 1812 and 1813 did as badly as, and no worse than, the Virginians in 1814. Indeed, one of the good results of the war was that it did away forever with all reliance on the old-time militia, the most expensive and inefficient species of soldiery that could be invented. During the first year the monotonous record of humiliations and defeats was only relieved by the splendid victories of the navy which the Federalists had created twelve

years previously, and which had been hurt rather than benefited in the intervening time. Gradually, however, the people themselves began to bring out leaders: two, Jackson and Scott, were really good generals, under whom our soldiers became able to face even the English regulars, then the most formidable fighting troops in the world; and it must be remembered that Jackson won his fights absolutely unhelped by the administration. In fact, the government at Washington does not deserve one shred of credit for any of the victories we won, although to it we directly owe the greater number of our defeats.

Granting, however, all that can be said as to the hopeless inefficiency of the administration, both in making ready for and in waging the war, it yet remains true that the war itself was eminently justifiable, and was of the greatest service to the nation. We had been bullied by England and France until we had to fight to preserve our national self-respect; and we very properly singled out our chief aggressor, though it would perhaps have been better still to have acted on the proposition advanced in Congress, and to have declared war on both. Although nominally the peace left things as they had been, practically we gained our point; and we certainly came out of the contest with a greatly increased reputation abroad. In spite of the ludicrous series of failures which began with our first attempt to invade Canada, and culminated at Bladensburg, yet in a succession of contests on the ocean and the lakes, we shattered the charmed shield of British naval invincibility; while on the northern frontier we developed under Scott and Brown an infantry which, unlike any of the armies of Continental Europe, was able to meet on equal terms the British infantry in pitched battle in the open; and

at New Orleans we did what the best of Napoleon's marshals, backed by the flower of the French soldiers, had been unable to accomplish during five years of warfare in Spain, and inflicted a defeat such as no English army had suffered during a quarter of a century of unbroken warfare. Above all, the contest gave an immense impetus to our national feeling, and freed our politics forever from any dependence on those of a foreign power.

The war was distinctly worth fighting, and resulted in good to the country. The blame that attaches to Madison and the elder Democratic-Republican leaders, as well as to their younger associates, Clay, Calhoun, and the rest, who fairly flogged them into action, relates to their utter failure to make any preparations for the contest, to their helpless inability to carry it on, and to the extraordinary weakness and indecision of their policy throughout; and on all these points it is hardly possible to visit them with too unsparing censure.

Yet, grave though these faults were, they were mild compared to those committed by Morris and the other ultra-Federalists of New York and New England. Morris's opposition to the war led him to the most extravagant lengths. In his hatred of the opposite party he lost all loyalty to the nation. He championed the British view of their right to impress seamen from our ships; he approved of peace on the terms they offered, which included a curtailment of our Western frontier, and the erection along it of independent Indian sovereignties under British protection. He found space in his letters to exult over the defeats of Bonaparte, but could spare no word of praise for our own victories.

He actually advocated repudiating our war debt,* on

* As, for instance, in a letter to David R. Ogden, April 5, 1813.

the ground that it was void, being founded on a moral wrong; and he wished the Federalists to make public profession of their purpose, so that when they should come back to power, the holders might have no reason to complain that there had been no warning of their intention. To Josiah Quincy, on May 15th, he wrote: "Should it be objected, as it probably will to favor lenders and their associates, that public faith is pledged, it may be replied that a pledge wickedly given is not to be redeemed." He thus advanced the theory that in a government ruled by parties, which come into power alternately, any debt could be repudiated, at any time, if the party in power happened to disapprove of its originally being incurred. No greenback demagogue of the lowest type ever advocated a proposition more dishonest or more contemptible.

He wrote that he agreed with Pickering that it was impious to raise taxes for so unjust a war. He endeavored, fortunately in vain, to induce Rufus King in the Senate to advocate the refusal of supplies of every sort, whether of men or money, for carrying on the war; but King was far too honorable to turn traitor. Singularly forgetful of his speeches in the Senate ten years before, he declared that he wished that a foreign power might occupy and people the West, so as, by outside pressure, to stifle our feuds. He sneered at the words union and constitution, as being meaningless. He railed bitterly at the honest and loyal majority of his fellow Federalists in New York, who had professed their devotion to the Union; and in a letter of April 29, to Harrison Gray Otis—who was almost as bad as himself—he strongly advocated secession, writing among other things that he wished the New York Federalists to declare publicly that "the Union, being the means of freedom, should

be prized as such, but that the end should not be sacrificed to the means." By comparing this with Calhoun's famous toast at the Jefferson birthday dinner in 1830, "The Union; next to our liberty the most dear; may we all remember that it can only be preserved by respecting the rights of the States and distributing equally the benefit and the burden of the Union," it can be seen how completely Morris's utterances went on all fours with those of the great Nullifier.

To Pickering he wrote, on October 17, 1814: "I hear every day professions of attachment to the Union, and declarations as to its importance. I should be glad to meet with some one who could tell me what has become of the Union, in what it consists, and to what useful purpose it endures." He regarded the dissolution of the Union to be so nearly an accomplished fact that the only question was whether the boundary should be "the Delaware, the Susquehanna, or the Potomac"; for he thought that New York would have to go with New England. He nourished great hopes of the Hartford Convention, which he expected would formally come out for secession; he wrote Otis that the convention should declare that the Union was already broken, and that all that remained to do was to take action for the preservation of the interests of the Northeast. He was much chagrined when the convention fell under the control of Cabot and the moderates. As late as January 10, 1815, he wrote that the only proceeding from which the people of his section would gain practical benefit would be a "severance of the Union."

In fact, throughout the War of 1812 he appeared as the open champion of treason to the nation, of dishonesty to the nation's creditors, and of cringing subserviency to a foreign power. It is as impossible to

reconcile his course with his previous career and teachings as it is to try to make it square with the rules of statesmanship and morality. His own conduct affords a conclusive condemnation of his theories as to the great inferiority of a government conducted by the multitude, to a government conducted by the few who should have riches and education. Undoubtedly he was one of these few; he was an exceptionally able man, and a wealthy one; but he went farther wrong at this period than the majority of our people—the "mob" as he would have contemptuously called them—have ever gone at any time; for though every State in turn, and almost every statesman, has been wrong upon some issue or another, yet in the long run the bulk of the people have always hitherto shown themselves true to the cause of right. Morris strenuously insisted upon the need of property being defended from the masses; yet he advocated repudiation of the national debt, which he should have known to be quite as dishonest as the repudiation of his individual liabilities, and he was certainly aware that the step is a short one between refusing to pay a man what *ought* to be his and taking away from him what actually *is* his.

There were many other Federalist leaders in the same position as himself, especially in the three Southern New England States, where the whole Federalist party laid itself open to the gravest charges of disloyalty. Morris was not alone in his creed at this time. On the contrary, his position is interesting because it is typical of that assumed by a large section of his party throughout the Northeast. In fact, the Federalists in this portion of the Union had split in three, although the lines of cleavage were not always well marked. Many of them remained heartily loyal to the national idea; the bulk

hesitated as to whether they should go all lengths or not; while a large and influential minority, headed by Morris, Pickering, Quincy, Lowell, and others, were avowed disunionists. Had peace not come when it did, it is probable that the moderates would finally have fallen under the control of these ultras. The party developed an element of bitter unreason in defeat; it was a really sad sight to see a body of able, educated men, interested and skilled in the conduct of public affairs, all going angrily and stupidly wrong on the one question that was of vital concern to the nation.

It is idle to try to justify the proceedings of the Hartford Convention, or of the Massachusetts and Connecticut legislatures. The decision to keep the New England troops as an independent command was of itself sufficient ground for condemnation; moreover, it was not warranted by any show of superior prowess on the part of the New Englanders, for a portion of Maine continued in possession of the British till the close of the war. The Hartford resolutions were so framed as to justify seceding or not seceding as events turned out; a man like Morris could extract comfort from them, while it was hoped they would not frighten those who were more loyal. The majority of the people in New England were beyond question loyal, exactly as in 1860 a majority of Southerners were opposed to secession; but the disloyal element was active and resolute, and hoped to force the remainder into its own way of thinking. It failed signally, and was buried beneath a load of disgrace; and New England was taught thus early and by heart the lesson that wrongs must be righted within, and not without the Union. It would have been well for her sister section of the South, so loyal in 1815, if forty-five years afterward she had spared herself the

necessity of learning the same lesson at an infinitely greater cost.

The truth is that it is nonsense to reproach any one section with being especially disloyal to the Union. At one time or another almost every State has shown strong particularistic leanings; Connecticut and Pennsylvania, for example, quite as much as Virginia or Kentucky. Fortunately the outbursts were never simultaneous in a majority. It is as impossible to question the fact that at one period or another of the past, many of the States in each section have been very shaky in their allegiance, as it is to doubt that they are now all heartily loyal. The secession movement of 1860 was pushed to extremities, instead of being merely planned and threatened, and the revolt was peculiarly abhorrent, because of the intention to make slavery the "corner-stone" of the new nation, and to reintroduce the slave trade, to the certain ultimate ruin of the Southern whites, but at least it was entirely free from the meanness of being made in the midst of a doubtful struggle with a foreign foe. Indeed, in this respect the ultra-Federalists of New York and New England in 1814 should be compared with the infamous Northern copperheads of the Vallandigham stripe rather than with the gallant Confederates who risked and lost all in fighting for the cause of their choice. Half a century before the "stars and bars" waved over Lee's last intrenchments, perfervid New England patriots were fond of flaunting "the flag with five stripes," and drinking to the health of the—fortunately still-born—new nation. Later on, the disunion movement among the Northern Abolitionists, headed by Garrison, was perhaps the most absolutely senseless of all, for its success meant the immediate abandonment of every hope of abolition.

In each one of these movements men of the highest character and capacity took part. Morris had by previous services rendered the whole nation his debtor; Garrison was one of the little band who, in the midst of general apathy, selfishness, and cowardice, dared to demand the cutting out of the hideous plague spot of our civilization; while Lee and Jackson were as remarkable for stainless purity and high-mindedness as they were for their consummate military skill. But the disunion movements in which they severally took part were wholly wrong. An Englishman of to-day may be equally proud of the valor of Cavalier and Roundhead; but, if competent to judge, he must admit that the Roundhead was right. So it is with us. The man who fought for secession warred for a cause as evil and as capable of working lasting harm as the doctrine of the divine right of kings itself. But we may feel an intense pride in his gallantry; and we may believe in his honesty as heartily as we believe in that of the only less foolish being who wishes to see our government strongly centralized, heedless of the self-evident fact that over such a vast land as ours the nation can exist only as a Federal Union; and that, exactly as the liberty of the individual and the rights of the States can only be preserved by upholding the strength of the nation, so this same localizing of power in all matters not essentially national is vital to the well-being and durability of the government.

Besides the honorable men drawn into such movements, there have always been plenty who took part in or directed them for their own selfish ends, or whose minds were so warped and their sense of political morality so crooked as to make them originate schemes

that would have reduced us to the impotent level of the Spanish-American republics. These men were peculiar to neither section. In 1803, Aaron Burr of New York was undoubtedly anxious to bring about in the Northeast* what sixty years later Jefferson Davis of Mississippi so nearly succeeded in doing in the South; and the attempt in the South to make a hero of the one is as foolish as it would be to make a hero of the other in the North. If there are such virtues as loyalty and patriotism, then there must exist the corresponding crime of treason; if there is any merit in practising the first, then there must be equal demerit in committing the last. Emasculated sentimentalists may try to strike from the national dictionary the word treason; but until that is done, Jefferson Davis must be deemed guilty thereof.

There are, however, very few of our statesmen whose characters can be painted in simple, uniform colors, like Washington and Lincoln on the one hand, or Burr and Davis on the other. Nor is Morris one of these few. His place is alongside of men like Madison, Samuel Adams, and Patrick Henry, who did the nation great service at times, but each of whom, at some one or two critical junctures, ranged himself with the forces of disorder.

After the peace, Morris accommodated himself to the altered condition with his usual buoyant cheerfulness; he was too light-hearted, and, to say the truth, had too good an opinion of himself, to be cast down even by the signal failure of his expectations and the memory of the by no means creditable part he had played. Besides,

* People sometimes forget that Burr was as willing to try sedition in the East as in the West.

he had the great virtue of always good-humoredly yielding to the inevitable. He heartily wished the country well, and kept up a constant correspondence with men high in influence at Washington. He disliked the tariff bill of 1816; he did not believe in duties or imposts, favoring internal, although not direct, taxation. He was sharp-sighted enough to see that the Federal party had shot its bolt and outlived its usefulness, and that it was time for it to dissolve. To a number of Federalists at Philadelphia, who wished to continue the organization, he wrote strongly advising them to give up the idea, and adding some very sound and patriotic counsel. "Let us forget party and think of our country. That country embraces both parties. We must endeavor, therefore, to save and benefit both. This cannot be effected while political delusions array good men against each other. If you abandon the contest, the voice of reason, now drowned in factious vociferation, will be listened to and heard. The pressure of distress will accelerate the moment of reflection; and when it arrives the people will look out for men of sense, experience, and integrity. Such men may, I trust, be found in both parties; and if our country be delivered, what does it signify whether those who operate her salvation wear a Federal or Democratic cloak?" These words formed almost his last public utterance, for they were penned but a couple of months before his death; and he might well be content to let them stand as a fit closing to his public career.

He died November 6, 1816, when sixty-four years old, after a short illness. He had suffered at intervals for a long time from gout; but he had enjoyed general good health, as his erect, commanding, well-built figure

showed; for he was a tall and handsome man. He was buried on his own estate at Morrisania.

There has never been an American statesman of keener intellect or more brilliant genius. Had he possessed but a little more steadiness and self-control he would have stood among the two or three very foremost. He was gallant and fearless. He was absolutely upright and truthful; the least suggestion of falsehood was abhorrent to him. His extreme, aggressive frankness, joined to a certain imperiousness of disposition, made it difficult for him to get along well with many of the men with whom he was thrown in contact. In politics he was too much of a free-lance ever to stand very high as a leader. He was very generous and hospitable; he was witty and humorous, a charming companion, and extremely fond of good living. He had a proud, almost hasty temper, and was quick to resent an insult. He was strictly just; and he made open war on all traits that displeased him, especially meanness and hypocrisy. He was essentially a strong man, and he was an American through and through.

Perhaps his greatest interest for us lies in the fact that he was a shrewder, more far-seeing observer and recorder of contemporary men and events, both at home and abroad, than any other American or foreign statesman of his time. But aside from this he did much lasting work. He took a most prominent part in bringing about the independence of the colonies, and afterward in welding them into a single powerful nation, whose greatness he both foresaw and foretold. He made the final draft of the United States Constitution; he first outlined our present system of national coinage; he originated and got under way the plan for the Erie

Canal; as minister to France he successfully performed the most difficult task ever allotted to an American representative at a foreign capital. With all his faults, there are few men of his generation to whom the country owes more than to Gouverneur Morris.

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